



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
October 2 – 9, 2015

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Nunavut's "art of dressing warm" goes on display

"I don't think Winnipeg's ever seen anything like this before"

THOMAS ROHNER, October 02, 2015 – 8:00 am



Sealskin items such as these were on display at a fundraising event Sept. 24 that the Winnipeg Art Gallery held for its Inuit Art Centre project. (PHOTO COURTESY OF PRAIRIEVIEW SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY)



A model wears a pair of sealskin boot covers designed by Mona Netser of Coral Harbour. (PHOTO COURTESY OF PRAIRIEVIEW SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY)



A model displays a sealskin vest at a fashion show Sept. 24 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Thirty models showed more than 50 looks featuring the work of Nunavut designers. ((PHOTO COURTESY OF PRAIRIEVIEW SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY))

Few can rival Nunavummiut when it comes to dressing right for winter.

So it makes sense that if or when Nunavut fashion designers break into the southern market, they'll do so on the strength of beautiful parkas and accessories made out of traditional Inuit materials like sealskin, bones and antlers.

And Nunavut fashion designers may be close to a breakthrough in southern markets after the Winnipeg Art Gallery hosted a recent fundraising fashion show, which aimed to celebrate “the art of dressing warm chic.”

Sherri Van Went, chair of the show's organizing committee, told *Nunatsiaq News* Sept. 25 that the audience was “gushing” after the unique Sept. 24 event.

“I don't think Winnipeg's ever seen anything like this before,” Van Went said.

The fashion show, called “What to Wear This Winter,” showcased a mix of urban, traditional and contemporary looks, Van Went said, in an effort to raise funds for the WAG's [Inuit Art Centre project](#).

That project will eventually house the largest public collection of contemporary Inuit art, currently held in trust by the WAG, and instill a community hub for the exploration and celebration of Inuit art and culture, she said.

The Nunavut Arts and Crafts Association partnered with the WAG for the show, connecting Nunavut designers with the show's organizing committee, Justin Ford, NACA's project manager, said in an interview.

“For NACA, this was a chance to show that Nunavut designers can compete in a southern market. And also to promote the sustainable use of sealskin products in a southern market.”

One of the unique aspects of this show, Ford and Van Went agree, was the single long runway, over 800 feet long, that wound through five separate gallery spaces, wrapping around a central skylight gallery on the WAG’s third floor.

“The 30 models ended up being pretty exhausted, it’s a long way to walk,” Van Went said, adding the one-hour show was attended by over 200 people.

“I got winded walking through it once,” Ford, who was not one of the 30 models, agreed.

The audience was treated to over 50 looks featuring Nunavut fashion designs, Van Went said, which included sealskin cuffs and earrings made of bone and antler.

One item that seemed to create a buzz were sealskin boot covers designed by Coral Harbour’s Mona Netser, Van Went said, explaining that the covers were like leg warmers that partly covered the models’ footwear.

“They looked sweet with heels ... I think we’re going to try to bring some of those into the gallery shop,” she said.

Van Went said it is too early to know how much money had been raised for the Inuit Art Centre, but judging by the audience, the event was a success.

“I would say our audience was thrilled with the evening.”

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavuts_art_of_dressing_warm_goes_on_display_needs_pic/

Alaska Native Heritage Center hosts circumpolar music festival

By [Rhonda McBride](#) 9:37 PM October 2, 2015
ANCHORAGE –

Two Inuit throat singers from Ottawa stood facing each other on the stage at the Alaska Native Heritage Center on Friday afternoon, preparing for their performance Saturday as part of the 2015 Circumpolar World Music Celebration.

To the uninitiated, the sounds are exotic — rhythmic breaths, grunts and moans, primitive yet sophisticated.

Kathy Kettler and Kendra Tagoona are proud to carry on this ancient tradition, practiced by women to entertain themselves when the men went off hunting.

“Throat singing has sort of made a revival in Canada, and a lot of young people are starting to do it again,” Tagoona said.

Sometimes the songs mimic sounds in nature or riff on Inuit words or phrases. The purpose is to make each other laugh.

One of the songs kept repeating the words “poor little puppy” in the Inuit language.

The women say you have to practice every day to master the sounds.

Saturday’s entertainment is a mix of tradition and modern music.

Other performers include:

- Marc Brown and the Blues Crew, winner of a Native American Music Association award
- Frozen Whitefish, contemporary Yup’ik rock group
- Kingikmiut Singers and Dancers of Anchorage
- Alaska Native Heritage Center Dancers

The entertainment starts at 10 a.m. and runs until 5 p.m. Admission

Direct Link: <http://www.ktva.com/alaska-native-heritage-center-hosts-circumpolar-music-festival-254/>

The language of the prairies

[Jason Kerr](#)

Published on October 03, 2015

Teaching Cree wasn’t Monica Lariviere’s goal when she first contacted the Prince Albert Multicultural Council.



Prince Albert Multicultural Council Cree instructor Monica Lariviere helps students with their pronunciation during a class on Tuesday. Lariviere is working with her second batch of students since she started teaching Cree.

Instead, she wanted to learn Mandarin, and wanted to know if the council offered classes. The employee on the phone made her a counter-offer.

“She asked if I was interested in learning Cree,” Lariviere remembers. “I told her, ‘I know Cree and I can read Cree,’ and she said, ‘great. We’re looking for a Cree teacher.’”

So Lariviere put Mandarin aside and began teaching the language of her birth. She grew up in Stanley Mission, speaking Cree with friends and family, but when they moved to Saskatoon and then Regina, her language skills faded.

“I gradually lost my Cree because I was with non-Cree children, and I didn’t have an interest in learning it,” she explains.

It was another move back to Stanley Mission that convinced her otherwise. Lariviere noticed the camaraderie that all the Cree speakers shared in the northern community. It rekindled her desire to learn and use the language, and she’s spoken it ever since.

“I was able to speak to my peers and my family and I felt a part of the family after learning (it).”

Lariviere’s first Cree class had 15 students. This time she has four. They meet in a classroom every Tuesday and Wednesday at the Multicultural Council office, and despite the small numbers there is plenty of enthusiasm.

“I’ve done a bit of French and a bit of Spanish, but I’ve never done anything that has been so different,” said Sarah Elsbury, one of Lariviere’s students. “It was really interesting to me to learn something that really is completely different from English, and I have a real appreciation for people that had to learn the other way, from Cree to English.”

Elsbury became interested in Cree culture first, then realized you couldn't fully appreciate the culture without knowing the language. She says she's a long way from proficiency, but she's happy to learn the basics.

"It would be great, obviously, in the future to get some sort of fluency with it, but I'm realistic at this point. It would take quite a bit of immersion to do that. I'm just hoping to do some basic conversations ... and if I take it further, I take it further. I am really enjoying it so that is a possibility."

Only one of the students in this year's class is Cree. However, Lariviere says she likes having non-Cree members in her class.

She likes the fact that people are branching out to learn about different cultures, and she's encouraged to see them showing interest.

"Languages are what makes people unique. What makes the individual, and I think it's important to preserve."

Direct Link: <http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2015-10-03/article-4297850/The-language-of-the-prairies/1>

Cultural Caretaker: You don't have a minute to waste

Tyrone Tootoosis' work takes on new sense of urgency

By Jason Warick, The StarPhoenix October 3, 2015

Tyrone Tootoosis sits down in his office chair, under an enlarged image of a Treaty Six medallion affixed to the ceiling.

Rows and rows of cassette tapes — decades worth of interviews with First Nations elders — line the walls.

On the shelves sit a well-worn Cree dictionary and a pouch of bullets recovered from the 1885 Battle of Cut Knife Hill.

Grainy photographs of Chief Poundmaker, Federation of Saskatchewan Indians founder John B. Tootoosis and other relatives seem to keep watch over him.

Surrounded by the invaluable collection of this land's history, Tootoosis is bringing it to life with a laptop almost permanently open to Facebook, a tape converter and other machines. He is immersed in the past, but believes social media and technology are keys to helping future generations.

“There’s a growing understanding of what happened and what needs to be done,” he said.

Translating the tapes, organizing powwows, participating in election forums, correcting inaccuracies at national historic sites and exposing corruption in all levels of government have always kept him busy.

But Tootoosis’ work has taken on a new sense of urgency following a grim health diagnosis. At times, he’s filled with the energy of a man half his 57 years. At other times, work and life can be a struggle. When he recently welcomed a pair of visitors to his farm 75 kilometres north of Saskatoon, Tootoosis walked gingerly and said only that the day had been a “tough one.”

Supporters hope to have Tootoosis’ talents and his wry sense of humour around for a long time.

“I can’t say enough about him. He’s a very humble man, but we all see the work he’s done,” said Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) vice-chief Bobby Cameron.

“Tyrone is one of our champions. He strengthens our communities.”

Iconic singer, songwriter and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie has been a Tootoosis family friend since before Tyrone was born.

“I’ve treasured the cultural information he shares with people, including me, both professionally and personally. I know Tyrone as a Cree speaker, an actor, a curator, a collector, a scholar, a horseman, a grassroots cultural expert,” Sainte-Marie wrote in an email from her Hawaii home.

“He’s the real deal.”

Tyrone Tootoosis slowly rises from his desk and heads out into the bright sunlight. As he approaches the corral, his beloved painted horses trot toward him. He’s already sold nine members of the prized stable, and plans to find new homes for all but his favourite three – Hidalgo, Blue Slave and Clay Medicine.

Tootoosis and his wife, University of Saskatchewan professor Winona Wheeler, are also auctioning off their elk hide moccasins, medicine wheel earrings, beadwork purses, original First Nations paintings and other possessions collected over a lifetime. It’s partly a general downsizing, partly an effort to help fund his future medical care.

“We’re not asking for handouts,” he said.

Tootoosis was born in 1958, at a time when Saskatchewan First Nations were realizing they could be stronger by uniting. Returning First Nations war veterans, denied the benefits afforded white soldiers, led the organizing efforts.

Tootoosis' grandfather, John, had been promoting the idea of a federation for a decade. Knowing the Indian Agent would not issue him the required permit to leave his reserve for "subversive" activity, Tootoosis often still in secret. He was pursued by RCMP on orders of the federal government, according to FSIN documents. Catholic Church officials threatened him with excommunication when his activities became known.

"The two helped each other – the churches and the government – to suppress the Indians," the leader recalled at a conference before he died in 1989, according to a Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre document. "The (First Nations) religious festivals were not allowed without permission. Naturally they were not allowed to visit other reserves without a permit. When I still I had only a certain time to visit. That is the way it was."

His grandfather was one of the first prominent leaders to push for the closure of Indian residential schools.

"He saw what was happening," Tootoosis said. In 1959, he was named the first president of the organization that would later become the FSIN.

In 1960, Saskatchewan-born Prime Minister John Diefenbaker extended full voting rights to First Nations people. Until then, they could vote only if they renounced their Indian status.

While his grandfather was strengthening the voice of Saskatchewan First Nations, Tootoosis' father, Wilfred, was working on another front.

He visited hundreds of First Nations elders across the prairies, interviewing them about the treaties, the events of 1885 and residential schools.

A six-year-old Tootoosis was often brought along. He'd be ordered to sit in silence, listening respectfully. Tootoosis said he learned a lot, but didn't always follow the rules. The youngster's voice can be heard in the background on some recordings.

With his father gone, the tapes have been passed to Tootoosis.

He's recorded many of his own as well. His wife's mother, Bernelda, one of the first indigenous female CBC journalists, also contributed reel-to-reel taped interviews before she died in 2005.

Helped in part by a Saskatchewan Arts Board grant, he's begun to translate, transcribe and digitize the massive library.

"Dad must have assumed I'd follow through on this. It's a mammoth task," he said.

"I don't consider myself a storyteller. My responsibility is to ensure the oral history, as told by the old people, is captured and shared with new technology. I am a story keeper."

It's one of many projects he's currently juggling. Tootoosis has been hired to create programs for the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Centre, set to open later this year on the U of S campus. He's helping a Regina health care group translate the names of body organs and diseases for elderly Cree patients. Last month, he organized a forum to debate whether First Nations people should vote in the federal election.

Next month, as he has for years, he'll direct hundreds of dancers, drummers and others who'll descend on Saskatoon for the FSIN powwow, the province's largest.

Health permitting, he'll also take his Great Plains Dance Company to China in the spring.

"What I like most about him is that he's in love with our culture," Buffy Sainte-Marie said.

Those are just his official commitments. On Monday, for example, he spent the day hunting white tail deer with young First Nations men who donate the meat to elders and other low-income Saskatoon residents.

"These are things that have to be done. I really have no choice. There are voids," he said.

In his work, Tootoosis attempts to honour his parents and grandparents, but also the ancestors he never met.

"I come from a family of radicals," he said with a laugh.

For nearly a century, Canadian students learned about the infamous "Siege of Battleford." On May 28, 1885, Poundmaker and other First Nations people left their reserve and still toward nearby Battleford. The town's 500 terrified settlers fled inside Fort Battleford. According to the long-accepted federal government account, Poundmaker and his men besieged the fort and cut off water and food supplies. They then looted and burned the town's homes before eventually leaving.

But in reality, Poundmaker asked to speak to the Indian Agent inside the fort and was rejected. Poundmaker, also known as Pihtokahanapiwiyin, wanted to ask for the food and farm implements that were promised under the treaties a decade earlier but never delivered. The buffalo had disappeared and his band members were starving to death, but he was clear in his resolve to honour the treaty.

When the government official refused to meet, some of Poundmaker's hungry warriors did raid some of the homes for food. Most of the raiding and looting, however, was done by federal soldiers.

"There was no 'siege.'" Tootoosis said.

The soldiers, under Colonel Otter, then advanced on Poundmaker's camp at Cut Knife Hill, but were soundly defeated. Poundmaker prevented further bloodshed by convincing his warriors not to pursue the retreating troops.

When Poundmaker again came to the Fort to negotiate peace and press for the food rations, he was imprisoned. He died of lung problems within a year.

The federal government did not provide the promised rations, and imposed even harsher conditions on reserves as punishment for the "rebellion."

Tootoosis has known the First Nations perspective on these events since he was that six-year-old boy listening to the elders. It took countless meetings and lobbying for a breakthrough. In 2010, amid the 125th anniversary commemorations of those events, as well as the battles at Batoche and Duck Lake, Tootoosis convinced the government to change the official record. The Parks Canada website for Fort Battleford now includes large sections from this First Nations perspective. The word "siege" is still referenced, but only to illustrate the fears of settlers.

Tootoosis, a nephew of legendary actor Gordon Tootoosis, played Poundmaker in a feature film and frequently quotes the leader in his widely read Facebook posts.

"You are the same people who fought so well and so bravely on Cut Knife Hill. But you are going to have to fight again, the hardest kind of fight. You must fight yourselves and this new way of thinking, that we are less than they are, because it is not true," Tootoosis quoted Poundmaker in a post last week.

More than 125 years after Poundmaker uttered that rallying cry, Tootoosis' own posts seem to echo those of his great, great, great uncle.

"Whatever we do, we cannot allow ourselves to become overwhelmed by the Government's relentless efforts in pursuing their assimilation agenda," Tootoosis posted on Sept. 12.

Tootoosis has spent his life helping others express their truth through song, dance, art, and voice recordings.

He's a man of contradictions; past and future, patience and urgency.

His health prognosis is unclear, but he's not dwelling on it. Tootoosis said he'll simply live by the words of his grandfather, John.

"You don't have one minute to waste."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Cultural+Caretaker+have+minute+waste/11411597/story.html>

Inuit voices take to the airwaves in Montreal

Inuktitut radio show launches Oct. 6 at CKUT FM

SARAH ROGERS, October 05, 2015 - 11:44 am



Annie Pisuktie, left, pictured here in 2011 while working as a case worker at Montreal shelter Chez Doris, is the host of a new Inuktitut-language radio show to be broadcast from Montreal starting Oct. 6. (FILE PHOTO)

Starting this week, Inuit in Montreal — and anywhere they have access to internet — can tune in and listen to a new Inuktitut-language radio show.

Nipivut, which means “our voices,” launches Oct. 6 at CKUT, a community radio station based at McGill University.

The hour-long show will be hosted by Annie Pisuktie, an Inuk case worker for correctional services who is originally from Iqaluit.

“It’s a place where Inuit can have a voice, to talk about issues that are important to their community,” said Mark Watson, a Concordia University professor and member of Nunaliijuaq, a research group that works with Montreal-based Inuit organizations.

As part of Nunaliijuaq’s efforts to connect Inuit to services in the city, and to each other, the group is taking over a 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. time slot once dedicated to a CKUT show called Native Solidarity News.

Nipivut will be one of only a few minority language shows broadcast on the predominantly English and French-language station.

“To our knowledge, this is the first-ever Inuktitut-language program broadcast from and to Montreal,” Watson said.

The show is also produced in collaboration with the Cabot Square revitalization project, focused around an urban park that is a gathering place for many Inuit and other Indigenous people.

The first broadcast is expected to feature interviews with people from organizations such as Nunavik's Northern Quebec Module, which oversees Nunavimmiut patient accommodations in Montreal, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit, an Ottawa-based social service and cultural agency which is [currently assessing services for Inuit in urban centres](#).

The first episode should also feature an interview with [Rev. Annie Ittoshat](#), the Inuk minister at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Montreal.

"It's also a chance to highlight Inuit music, art, design and storytelling," Watson said of the show. "It's really a great opportunity to show the diversity of what's going on."

The show's producers are hoping to use [Ingutaapiga](#) as its theme music, an old song by Nunavik songwriter Tumasi Quissa, remixed by Inuk electronic artist Geronimo Inutiq.

The language used on the show should be about 60 to 70 per cent Inuktitut, Watson said, allowing for some English or French language programming.

That's so Nipivut can reach some non-Inuktitut speaking Inuit in the city, as well as Montreal's non-Inuit population.

Pisuktie, the show's host, also wants to use the show to help connect Inuit in the North with Inuit in the South, Watson said.

Listeners on the island of Montreal can tune into Nipivut starting Oct. 6 at 6:00 p.m. at 90.3 FM.

Elsewhere, listeners can tune in to episodes posted on CKUT's [website](#).

"We think it's a great model that could work in other Canadian cities," Watson said. "It's a great opportunity to connect people."

Direct Link:

<http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit-voices-take-to-montreal-airwaves/>

Margaret Atwood on how an inspired polymath resurrected Native America's epics

Robert Bringhurst and the rediscovery of the Haida mythtellers.

By [Margaret Atwood](#), 5 October 2015

Robert Bringhurst's *A Story as Sharp as a Knife* is not only a testament to a monumental labour of love and intellect; it is an astonishing and essential book. But astonishing how, and essential why? Or otherwise put: astonishing and essential to whom? Astonishing and essential to anyone interested in storytelling, and stories, and how they move, and their local and universal nature, and what functions they may fulfil in their society. To anyone interested in myth, and how mythic stories differ from anecdote. To anyone interested in poetry, and how it may be constructed; thus, to anyone interested in structure and form, on which subjects Bringhurst is an expert. To anyone interested in the differences between oral poetry and literature, and written poetry and literature. To anyone interested in our human history and prehistory. To anyone interested in what makes us human, with language at the top of the list: how we think, or rather think-feel; how we express that activity; how we create "meaning".

And also, to anyone interested in the catastrophic meltdown that took place in societies and nations all over North and South America after 1492, when Columbus made land with his boatload of infectious diseases to which Native Americans had no immunity. The mortality rate is estimated at 80 to 90 per cent: the largest human die-off we know about, much larger than the Black Death. For *A Story as Sharp as a Knife* is part of that event, as well, as it played out on Haida Gwaii, a once-mighty island nation located on the north-west coast of what is now Canada, in the 19th century.

A Story as Sharp as a Knife explores all those interests, as they come together in the story of how this book came to be. That story begins with two oral epic poets from Haida Gwaii, Ghandl and Skaay, one of them blind, who were living at the end of the 19th century, in a time of the almost-extinction of their people, and who made a last attempt to save something that might be passed on. Then there was a young American anthropologist, John Reed Swanton, who spoke no Haida but who wanted to record what he thought were folk tales, and an interpreter who helped him make phonic transcriptions and a rough translation.

Finally, Robert Bringhurst himself wandered into the dormant story, and found Swanton's material slumbering in a library, and woke it up, and deciphered it, and led it out of its thorn-encircled castle. Is Robert Bringhurst this book's author? Its singer? Its translator? Its fabricator? Is he a kind of Hermes, revealer of secrets, opener of doors, messenger who travels between worlds, including the world of the gods and the underworld? Is he a magician, bringing the dead back to life? For the story of *A Story as Sharp as a Knife* is also the story of Robert Bringhurst.

There's no getting around it: Robert Bringhurst is a kind of genius. And like many kinds of genius, an odd duck. The paths he's followed have not been those trodden by your run-of-the-mill duck. Unlikely are his ways, several are his attributes, many are his works,

riddling are sometimes his words, and in *The Hobbit* he'd be Gandalf, who hasn't got much of a personal backstory that he chooses to reveal.

Bringhurst has many strings to his magic bow; in fact, he has many bows. His studies have included (brace yourself): architecture, linguistics, physics, comparative literature and philosophy. He's a poet himself, with over a dozen titles. In an interview, he said of his poet self:

"I am not my favourite subject. The earth is a lot bigger and more interesting than I am. I also have a strong desire . . . not to be trapped in my own time. The poetry of the present, when it isn't playing language games, is routinely full of self-display and personal confession – or, to put it more kindly, it is full of self-exploration. In classical Greece or Tang Dynasty China or Renaissance Italy, and in the great oral cultures that were native to North America, there was very little art of that kind. Artists in those times and places were interested in human relations, too, and had serious questions to ask themselves – but most of the time they found it more fruitful and more powerful not to deal with the self directly."

He is also a thinker about poetry and what it's doing in the world: *The Tree of Meaning* (2006) contains, for instance, one of the really necessary meditations on form in poetry: how it works, why it's there. Bringhurst compares it to wings on a bird: the bird may not use them to fly (as in poems that, as we say, don't get off the ground), but without the structure of the wing, no bird flight is possible. Or as he puts it: "Wings are a constraint that makes it possible to fly."

In addition to that, he's written what is possibly the key book on typography and book design, *The Elements of Typographic Style* (1992). "In a badly designed book," he remarks, "the letters mill and stand like starving horses in a field. In a book designed by rote, they sit like stale bread and mutton on the page. In a well-made book, where designer, compositor and printer have all done their jobs, no matter how many thousands of lines and pages, the letters are alive." Thus he is well versed in the visual dimension of significant human markings, and takes them very seriously indeed; which stands him in good stead when he is interpreting the visual clues in the Haida poems.

What do all these things have to do with one another? To be a magician in the world of Ursula K Le Guin's *Earthsea*, you'd have to have a similar portfolio of knowledge and skills: the true names for things, how to fit words together to make powerful structures, what the world is made of in both its human and its non-human dimensions, the songs and stories about it, its deep semi-forgotten roots in the dark backward and abysm of time, and the many languages in which it speaks. "How things fit together" might be a way of describing the quests Bringhurst has pursued. For he seems to have been on a Holy Grail search for most of his life.

This bundle of interests and expertise made him the perfect Prince Charming to come across John Swanton's neglected Haida oral poetry transcriptions, and to hack his way – with help – through the thicket of brambles surrounding them. He needed to teach

himself Haida, a language which he still claims not to speak (though he could fool just about everyone on that score, since there's only a handful of fluent speakers alive). He then needed to discover the structural principles of the epics he was translating: not easy, since Haida (like Japanese) does not use rhyme as a structuring principle, nor does it use metrical feet in the way that English and French do. The structure he uncovered is based partly on numbers (enter the physicist), as is music, and our own poetry; but the significance of the numbers as symbols is different. "Nine", for Robert Graves, pointed to the Moon Goddess; in the Haida context it is an unfinished number, gesturing towards ten, its completion.

Next, he needed to learn the iconography of the Haida: the signs for clans, the signs for supernatural beings, the objects that point to the myths about them: myths everyone in the culture would have known, in the way we know a certain kind of cross means "Christianity" and another kind of cross means "Nazi". The colour red in western iconography has many meanings, including passion, blood and Mary Magdalene. Among the Haida, a blue and red staff is the sign of a supernatural being. Every culture is filled with short cuts like this – signs that point to things all those within that culture can immediately grasp – and to understand the poems, Bringhurst needed to learn the symbol system.

Then he needed to think about why the Haida poets grouped stories together, the way Christian artists would group paintings in a triptych or murals around the inside of a church. Context is key, for any cultural artefact; and any cultural artefact, though it is made or shaped by an individual, is also, always, an expression of its culture. And finally, he needed to craft the results of all his work into a book – a shapely book; a book about the meaning of meaning; a book that did justice to his subject. This subject would be unknown to most of the readers he might hope to reach, just as Ghandl and Skaay hoped to reach people in the future who would not have known anything about their own art and their own society. And he needed to make this gnarly subject legible and indeed fascinating to his potential readers; because if the reader does not read, the message has not passed from mind to mind, and love's labour will have been lost.

Most would have been daunted by the challenge. But Robert Bringhurst, we feel, enjoys being daunted. Many knights errant would have turned back. Many, indeed, would have stayed away in the first place: why put so much labour into something that must have seemed forbiddingly obscure? So into the dark forest he plunged; and then, after battles we can only begin to imagine, out of the forest he came, carrying this book of wonders.

He encountered opposition. Not everyone welcomed his vision of this Haida material as art, as poetry, as the creation of talented individual artists. So that was the final thing he needed to do: confront those who saw his grail as theirs, or as a teacup, or as the product of an anonymous drinking-vessel mass-production company. But Bringhurst is stubborn enough so he is not easily cowed. He has stood his ground. His book, he insists, is indeed a book of wonders.

And what a book of wonders it is! It does what wonder-books do: it opens locked doors, it reveals vistas, it illuminates. While reading it, you will see many things in a new light. Never again will you be able to think of oral poems as the product of some anonymous “mass”, as Swanton’s teacher, Franz Boas, liked to think of it; instead you will recognise that such poems were the creations of individuals working within their cultures. The best-known author in the world may well be “Anonymous”, but that is only because the names of Anonymous have been forgotten.

Instead of thinking of “native” stories as simple folk tales, you will be able to imagine them as they must have been experienced by their hearers: both beautifully formed works of art with precisely chosen words, and complex dramatic performances acted out by their poets in a darkness illuminated by flickering firelight. And each performance, like each poem, was one of a kind. As Bringhurst says of a performance by Ghandl, “It is a work of music built from silent images, sounding down the years. It is a vision painted indelibly in the air with words that disappear the moment they are spoken.”

Bringhurst also translated a number of Ghandl’s myth poems, which he published in *Nine Visits to the Mythworld*, with helpful explanatory notes. One of them is so much like the *Swan Lake* motif you will gasp, except that the woman who is also a bird isn’t a swan, it’s a Canada goose. There’s no Black Swan, but there is a sequence in which the man loses his bride and has to seek her through many ordeals. But my favourite is the story of Wolverine, who kills a woman and stuffs himself into her skin – shades of *Men in Black* – hoping through this impersonation to gain access to the entire tribe and eat them. The fraud is detected through Wolverine’s bad manners, a detail I cherish, and the supernatural being Mouse Woman sets things right. As with ancient Greek myth in its oral form, these poems were performed on specific occasions to specific audiences, and wisdom was transmitted through them.

Bringhurst’s devotion to the art of his long-dead fellow poets is evident on every page of *A Story as Sharp as a Knife*. Since he chooses his words advisedly, let us allow him the last ones:

“Ghandl’s spoken poem, like an apple or a loaf of home-made bread – or a coho skin or a cedar tree or Diego Velázquez’s painting – is both familiar and one-of-a-kind. It is something new and locally flavoured, fulfilling age-old, independently recurrent and widely travelled themes. And it is part of a whole forest of themes and variations, echoes and allusions, spreading out through space and time. It is one piece of work; it is also part of a fabric that is torn and patched, woven and unwoven day after day, night after night, and sentence after sentence, like the cloth on Penelope’s loom.”

The first UK edition of “A Story as Sharp as a Knife: the Classical Haida Myhtellers and Their World” by Robert Bringhurst is published by the Folio Society and illustrated by Don Yeomans (£80). foliosociety.com

Direct Link: <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2015/10/margaret-atwood-how-inspired-polymath-resurrected-native-america-s-epics>

Art experts discuss indigenous art displays and sales

By Kerry Benjoe, Leader-Post October 6, 2015

REGINA – The Saskatchewan Professional Art Galleries Association wants to know why indigenous artists are not working with commercial galleries.

On Monday, SaskGalleries hosted a one-day symposium, Articulations at the MacKenzie Art Gallery to discuss the issue.

Adam Martin, executive director of Sakewewak First Nations Artists Collective, was pleased SaskGalleries took the initiative to find out why there is a disconnect between the two groups.

He believes it is possible for commercial galleries and First Nations to bridge that gap, but not without communication. They both need to know what the current barriers are and why they exist.

One such barrier is a lack of education on both sides, indigenous artists need to be educated about the business of selling art and galleries need to be educated about indigenous history and customs.

“You don’t usually see First Nations art displayed in these commercial spaces,” Adam said, adding it’s not just commercial galleries.

Not many indigenous artists approach Sakewewak interested in displaying their work.

However, he would rather have artists come into residencies so they could learn the art business from start to finish because that is not something taught in university.

Adam believes First Nations artists would be open to showing their work in galleries and to market their art, but they just don’t know how to do it.

Michelle LaVallee, who spoke at a panel discussion, Monday, said there are several factors one must consider to fully understand why there are not as many indigenous artists working with commercial galleries.

She said history has not been kind to Canada’s indigenous people including artists.

In the 1960s and ’70s, indigenous artists fought to be recognized because rather than be viewed as artists they were often labelled as crafters.

Daphne Odjig, one of Canada's most revered indigenous artists, opened her store in order to sell her own and other indigenous artists' work to the public.

LaVallee said setting a price for certain work is also a struggle because of the history of undervaluing indigenous art.

She believes businesses like Tatanka Boutique are helping to set a market price for indigenous artists.

Both she and Adams hope the symposium is just the first step. They would like to see educational workshops take place so both sides learn more about each other.

The one-day symposium, also featured a keynote from Nicole Klugsbrun, a New York Art Dealer who closed her Chelsea gallery after 30 years to go online.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/entertainment/experts+discuss+indigenous+displays+sales/11418068/story.html>

Barriers to First Nations artists discussed at symposium

By Kerry Benjoe, Leader-Post October 6, 2015

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"You don't usually see First Nations art displayed in these commercial spaces," Adam said, adding it's not just commercial galleries - not many indigenous artists approach Sakewewak interested in displaying their work.

However, he would rather have artists come into residencies so they could learn the art business from start to finish because that is not something taught in university, he said.

Adam said he believes First Nations artists would be open to showing their work in galleries and marketing their art, they just don't know how to do it.

Michelle LaVallee, who spoke at a panel discussion with Davis Garneau and Adrian Stimpson, said several factors must be considered to fully understand why fewer indigenous artists work with commercial galleries. She noted history has not been kind to Canada's indigenous people, including artists. In the 1960s and '70s, indigenous artists fought to be recognized; they were often labelled as crafters rather than artists.

Setting a price for certain work is also a struggle because of the history of undervaluing indigenous art, She said. She believes businesses like Tatanka Boutique are helping to set a market price for indigenous artists.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/entertainment/barriers+first+nations+artists+discussed+symposium/11417006/story.html>

Indian and Cowboy lays the foundation for an Indigenous media revolution

By [Roshini Nair](#)
| October 6, 2015



Ryan McMahon is an Anishinaabe comedian and writer and founder of [Indian and Cowboy](#), an Indigenous multimedia network. The network, which features some of the most creative podcasts on the web, has its one-year anniversary on October 6, 2015.

Roshini Nair spoke with McMahon about the creation of Indian and Cowboy, the influence of Idle No More and what to expect from Indigenous media in the future. This interview has been lightly edited and condensed.

What is Indian and Cowboy?

Indian and Cowboy is a digital media network. Right now, we're focused on building our foundation. So the podcast platform is our first step in establishing a digital space for Indigenous content. We set out on an 18-month beta period and on October 6 we turn one year old. In that year, we've managed to produce seven podcasts, five that run on a full-time basis and two that were sort of special miniseries presentations and the foundation is really important to us.

The podcasting space we targeted on purpose because it is such a new medium. It is relatively inexpensive to run podcasts and they are flexible and we're able to send them to community radio stations and we're essentially opening our content up... we're telling people to steal our shows so they can play them in their community and continue these conversations on the ground, at the grassroots level. The foundation was really important and we'll continue to publish other things digitally. We are producing video, a web series -- but that is going to happen through 2016.

How did you find the podcasters for Indian and Cowboy?

That's a great question. We're still finding them really. Those that know about podcasts are crazy about podcasts. Those that podcast obviously have to be very excited because there's little to no money involved.

I've been podcasting since 2008. Myself, I've always loved radio, but I fell in love with podcasting because it allowed me to be a stay-at-home dad -- it allowed me to be a comedian to throw stuff on the wall and see what would stick. And it was so exciting to be able to self-publish and not get caught up in being wrangled by the CRTC or slow television development process. You could come up with a good idea, record it, and hit send.

When I started Indian and Cowboy, I looked around the space. There was very little Indigenous podcasting happening. In fact, I would say there was only a couple on the Internet and I just got lucky that Métis in Space -- Chelsea Vowel and Molly Swain -- saw what I was doing with Indian and Cowboy and they said hey, why don't we come over there and we'll join forces and just kind of organically found people who were passionate about radio and that's the way Indian and Cowboy started.

Now what we're doing is developing shows, developing content and developing producers, so we're more active in the process of finding people with unique voices that we think could offer really great insight into these little niche ideas that we come up.

When you say niche ideas, what are some examples of that?

[Métis In Space](#) is a perfect example. A couple of Métis women sit down with a bottle of wine and watch an old sci-fi flick and talk about the colonial tropes in the sci-fi genre and how that has sort of informed that moment in television and that industry by propping up those colonial tropes. I mean, that's pretty niche: if you like sci-fi and you like decolonization, we have a show for you!

We have another one called [Indigenous Prime](#) hosted by Team Canada Mens Volleyball player Dallas Soonias, who is Cree from Alberta. He's creating an Indigenous sports podcast basically to talk to professional athletes, amateur athletes, Olympians, college and university athletes, high school athletes to talk about their path and their journey through athletics and education, and encourage young people to stay fit and have fun.

Then there's my own podcast, [Red Man Laughing](#); the [Think Indigenous](#) podcast about Indigenous education and the failings therein.

I mean essentially what we're creating is something the world's never seen before and that's why we sit by these [microphones in our closets](#) for no money.

The creation process is important. What is it about the medium of podcasting that makes it so special?

I guess you know you could get fancy and call it the democratization of media, which I think is good and bad. You can talk about the value that it adds to existing media, the way it supports writers and comedians and artists, musicians. You can talk about a whole bunch of different reasons about why podcasting is valuable.

But I think most importantly, it allows people that have been traditionally shut out of mainstream capital-M media to have their voice heard. And essentially, if you put in the time and energy to make something, people will find it. And what's really awesome is that, just through the offerings that we have and the shows that we do have, each has their own audiences.

To be an Anishinaabe comedian on my own in the world of comedy, I feel like I've built a community around my voice and my ideas which isn't about propping up my own ideas but it is about building community as it is about furthering those ideas in conversations and in spaces, and I think for me, that's why podcasting is so important.

If you choose to do it, you can with a very, very small investment on the equipment side. You're talking about less than \$100 to get you started in creating whatever it is you want to create. The tools are mostly free online, and, I mean, our languages are endangered in many of our territories and nations. You start to think about -- wow, I could start a language podcast and single handedly tackle the loss of our language by pressing the record button.

Those things are special, and so when we talk about the way we can use podcasting, that's what Indian and Cowboy is. It's the new Wild West. Podcasting: there are no rules, it's a wide open space, it's yours to discover.



You're a comedian, and you host the podcast Red Man Laughing on Indian and Cowboy. How do you use humour to connect to your audience?

I'm a standup comedian and a comedy writer, so humour informs everything I do really. I use podcasting as a different way to use my voice. When I started Red Man Laughing, (which is in its fourth season, it was just turned into a [national comedy special](#) for CBC Radio 1), I would do characters, fake commercials, I would play live clips of my standup, and it was my comedy that I was featuring. I would play music and albums of friends of mine who were musicians. It was just a chance for people to hang out with me. I was creating material and it was a free way for me to write.

And then [Idle No More](#) happened, and it was like -- I've got 20,000 people who listen to this every week and I have a responsibility. I'm a part of Idle No More, I'm an organizer, I have this platform and I better start talking to people. It organically kind of changed into this whole other thing that it is now and it's not funny. I just dedicated the whole fifth season of this podcast to reconciliation. Episode 1 of Red Man Laughing is dedicated to talking about the [Onaman Collective](#) and their land-based education work with youth. There's very little funny about that, and I don't really go for jokes on the podcast...though myself I'm kind of funny sometimes, but yeah, I don't go for jokes there.

It's kind of my space to take off, think a little deeper about things and deconstruct things in a different way and I think why people like it is they get to see me when I'm not on stage. They see me for me, with all my faults, with all my biases, with all my processes of learning. To me, that's the greatest reward of podcasting has been "yeah, I'm a comedian" but also you've seen in five seasons, you've seen me challenge myself and others to think deeper on issues. To experience this growth with an audience, I think it goes back to the medium being so personal and intimate.

I don't necessarily feel the responsibility to go for jokes on the podcast. I created a separate podcast for that called [Ryan McMahan Gets Angry](#), that's where my angry, ranty humour goes. Red Man Laughing is reserved for other things.

Which is kind of ironic.

[Laughing] It's so stupid. I mean at this point, after four complete seasons, 116 hours of content, a national comedy special, two cross-Canada tours with the podcast -- it's just the worst-named podcast ever.

But people want to listen to Red Man Laughing over Red Man Crying, I would think.

I cry so much on the podcast, it's ridiculous. If you go back to the first season (and it's all at the website), it's so silly and stupid. Then you listen to the first episode of the fifth season and this is not the same show at all. It would be dishonest of me to change the name and hide the first season. It's all there for everyone to see.

Again, this speaks to the opportunities of the medium. I mean there is an opportunity for a flat out fictional podcast where we can do stuff like the [Dead Dog Café](#) on the CBC in the late 1990s. We could look at creating comedy, and looking at our storytelling through podcasting, all of those opportunities are right in front of us, and the only thing stopping us is us.

We're very creative, we can use our imagination, we can collaborate with non-Indigenous folks to create something completely different. What is so great about this is that the only thing limiting us is us. The CRTC has no say on what we can put on the air, our advertisers and sponsors will support us if they see the vision behind it, we get to build our alliances and create community where one may not have existed before.

When you think about all those things and put all those things into one big pile, I mean, how can you not get excited by the medium? The spinoffs, of course, TV shows can come from things. Films can come from these things. Just through our [Stories from the Land](#) podcast, we have three film treatments completed already from the three episodes. So three of the 14 episodes have heard writers' ideas on films and documentaries. And it's like, what else can we do?

So this one-year anniversary is a big moment for Indian and Cowboy, and Indigenous Media in general. Where do you see it going after this first year anniversary?

I can't tell. Technology changes so quickly. What I know for sure is that our podcast network will continue to grow. We have some incredible offerings coming up. On October 6, we're launching four new podcasts.

And I mean, what I know for sure in this next year, we have to start looking at how to finance this thing. We're using [Patreon](#) right now to fund us monthly, and we're raising just enough money to pay our bills and to have a technical producer comb through our files and make sure they are broadcast worthy and we're breaking even.

But we have to get into a position where if we're going to take the next step forward and really start looking at how to create this thing into something viable, then we have to start

to look at how do we fund these things, how do we look at bringing staff members on to take care of the creative production and the technical production, and how do we look at taking the next steps in offering other digital content and creating these treatments and projects to look at research for our documentaries that we want to do and looking at investigative journalism I mean, every day is an emergency when we talk about the type of work that we do through these mediums.

We have to look at ways that we can really start to raise some money and start paying people to take this thing to the next level and that's what the next year is going to challenge me to do. We've had investors come and look at us but it's pretty hard to run a podcast network where most of the shows are framed in a decolonial framework. To have a podcast called "Stories from the Land paid for by Enbridge" -- that just wouldn't make sense. We've had investors offer us money, but in good faith, we've had to turn away from that money and for now, operate on a zero budget.

Anything else you'd like to add?

In turning one year old, we'd like to say thanks to our listeners, and allies like rabble. The day we launched, rabble ran something for us, and again, thank you to you for being willing to do it.

Roshini Nair is a multimedia journalist based in Vancouver. Follow her on twitter @roshini_c_nair.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/news/2015/10/indian-and-cowboy-lays-foundation-indigenous-media-revolution>

Adami: Inuit artist back at women's shelter while work displayed at gallery

[Hugh Adami, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: October 7, 2015 | Last Updated: October 7, 2015 7:18 PM EDT

Acclaimed Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook doesn't live very far from the SAW Gallery on Nicholas Street, where some of her work is on display to the public.

Pootoogook has returned to a women's shelter at Murray Street and King Edward Avenue, where she sleeps, eats and socializes with numerous other homeless people.

The diminutive Pootoogook, 46, doesn't seem to have changed much since we last spoke in 2014 — that time alongside a Queensway off-ramp at St. Laurent Boulevard, where she panhandled with her then boyfriend. But she certainly seemed cheerful and content Wednesday as she spoke about the friends she hangs with at the Shepherds of Good

Hope. "I've been living here with nice people," she says. "... they protect me, they look after me.

"They give me cigarettes and booze ... They give me a hug."

Pootoogook says she moved out of her ex-boyfriend's apartment in Billings Bridge recently because of constant spats. For the time being, she likes life at Sheps a lot better. She wasn't physically abused by the man, she says, but allows that "I have to survive." She says her friends told her he was around the other day, looking to see if they could get back together.

The man was convicted of assaulting Pootoogook in 2012 and jailed for 45 days — three months after she gave birth to their child in a washroom at the Shepherds shelter, where she had gone to stay while he was in jail for theft. The Children's Aid Society seized the child, a baby girl. She was adopted.

Pootoogook is proud her work is being displayed at SAW. Though SAW did not make anyone available for comment, the gallery is displaying three sexually explicit drawings that Pootoogook says she drew years ago when she lived in Cape Dorset, Nunavut. She didn't know how SAW got her work, but says she has been invited to the gallery to begin drawing again. She is also proud of a cloth bag she says the gallery gave her. It's decorated with a figure from one of her drawings at the gallery.

Pootoogook says her days are usually the same. After rising at the women's shelter, she'll have breakfast across the street at the Shepherd's soup kitchen, maybe panhandle outside the Metro store on Rideau Street, gather with friends and stepbrother outside to talk and smoke, and then have lunch. By early afternoon, she admits she is drinking in various "hiding places." She eventually has supper at another soup kitchen in the area and normally finishes the day in a stupor.

Pootoogook says she knows she has an alcohol problem and plans to see an addiction counsellor. She is on probation because she made a "mistake" related to drinking.

She says "it's hard" for her to abstain. "When people tell you to stop drinking," says Pootoogook, her tendency is to "keep drinking and drinking."

At one point during our conversation, Pootoogook suddenly starts to cry. She explains she is going through a "hard time in my life ... I've been losing family." Two uncles on her mother's side, who lived in Cape Dorset, recently passed, she says. "But I have to be strong."

Pootoogook rose to international acclaim about 15 years ago for her coloured-pencil drawings of Inuit life in Cape Dorset. Major exhibits of her drawings in Europe, the U.S. and Canada brought glowing reviews and awards. Some of her work chronicled her own experiences with physical and sexual abuse and living with alcoholic relatives.

Despite her success, she could not overcome her tragic past, and her life started to spiral out of control with drugs and alcohol. She and her former boyfriend, whom she met in 2011 in Ottawa, emerged in July 2012, after spending weeks sleeping outdoors, with the announcement that Pootoogook was pregnant. They were now clean, said the boyfriend, and looking for a fresh start. Pootoogook always let him do most of the talking — as well as the bartering for pieces of her work after she briefly started drawing again for cigarette money.

She says she is going to take the gallery up on its offer of studio space where she can draw, but she doesn't know when. For now, she says she will remain with her friends. "They take good care of me."

Eventually, Pootoogook says she has to go. "Have a good day," she says, and seems to really mean it.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/adami-inuit-artist-back-at-womens-shelter-while-work-displayed-at-gallery>

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Linking Cultures, Creating Jobs: British Columbia First Nations Are Leaders in Indigenous Tourism

[Hans Tammemagi](#)

10/2/15

Loud whoops reverberated, spears waved, and deer hooves attached to ankles rattled as a dozen Tzinquaw Dancers of the Cowichan First Nation, their faces painted in fierce red stripes, hopped and swayed to the beat of drums. After the performance, visitors wandered among towering totems, watched carving demonstrations, and savoured bannock and salmon cooked over an open fire. This is the Quw'utsun Cultural Centre in Duncan on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and it is a magnet for those seeking to learn about Native culture.

In 1998, the non-profit, stakeholder-based Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (ATBC) was formed. Its goals are straightforward: to promote Native culture and help Native tourism businesses get started and then succeed.

There are powerful reasons to take the indigenous-tourism path, as Keith Henry, a Métis and CEO of ATBC, explains.

“For many Native communities it’s the single, most-important economic opportunity because forestry has come and gone and there are difficulties with pipelines and the oil-and-gas industry,” he told Indian Country Today Media Network in a recent interview. “Cultural tourism is sustainable, and it can be achieved simply by sharing the community’s story and building appropriate infrastructure. Furthermore, indigenous tourism helps preserve Native culture and identity while offering society the opportunity to learn about a history that goes back thousands of years.”

ATBC helps potential enterprises and entrepreneurs learn basics such as designing business plans and acquiring/managing finances. Once the businesses are running, the association helps them market their products by preparing brochures, advertising, attending trades shows, operating a website and raising public awareness. The aboriginal cultural tourism industry in British Columbia has made huge strides, and today there are more than 200 aboriginal tourism businesses in the province, which together contribute \$561 million in value-added GDP. Growth has been strong, with an 85 percent increase since 2006. Eight major cultural centers, numerous art galleries, museums, canoe voyages, wineries, resorts and golf courses are evidence that First Nations tourism is flourishing.

At the Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism conference recently held in Vancouver, where 130 delegates from 10 countries gathered to share knowledge, it was recognized that aboriginal tourism can contribute significantly to raising the rights, respect and standard of living for Indigenous Peoples around the globe. British Columbia First Nations, as leaders in this field, can provide considerable assistance to other groups.

The reasons for B.C.’s success are several. There was, and continues to be, strong Native leadership. Governments at both the provincial and federal level understand the importance of this market sector and support it. British Columbia, through its natural beauty, attracts many tourists and, moreover, many of those visitors have a strong interest in Native culture and history. B.C. First Nations have rich and attractive art and culture to offer, with considerable diversity: There are 198 distinct First Nations in B.C. with different customs, myths and languages. A key ingredient is the umbrella organization, ATBC.

An excellent place to experience aboriginal tourism is the mist-enshrouded isles of Haida Gwaii, off the northern coast of B.C. Visitors can tour Skedans and four other protected sites, spiritual places with a sad legacy, where fallen and leaning totem poles are the only traces of once-flourishing villages that were wiped out by settlers and disease. In contrast, the Haida Heritage Centre is a joyful place with its museum, performance hall, carving shed and restaurant. The Haida also offer fishing charters, art galleries, and wildlife viewing.

Brenda Baptiste, Osoyoos First Nation and chairperson of the ATBC, offers tips for those breaking into the tourism sector.

“You need to have a very clear vision for where you’re heading,” she said. “Then you need to stay true to your vision, because it will take a lot of work.”

Research is key as well, she added.

“A vital step is to conduct research into the potential market,” Baptiste said. “Without baseline data, how can you proceed? How would you get financial support? This can be a difficult for people with an oral tradition.”

Baptiste also feels that an organization like ATBC, which is arms-length from government, is needed to represent and coordinate all levels of market development. Building strong partnerships with governments is also essential. With those ingredients, the experts said, indigenous tourism has a very bright future.

“The market is not even close to being saturated,” stated Henry emphatically, “Our research shows that last year four million visitors to B.C. wanted an aboriginal experience, but we could only satisfy about 15 percent of that demand, which is growing. Our big challenge is to harness enough Native experiences and get them market ready.”

Such tourism provides jobs as well as meaningful interaction.

“Aboriginal tourism,” said Henry, “helps create sustainable and meaningful employment for Native communities, and provides the impetus for elders to pass down culture, history and tradition to youth.”

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/10/02/linking-cultures-creating-jobs-british-columbia-first-nations-are-leaders-indigenous>

Aboriginal Community Development

Picture-perfect Torngat Mountains National Park leaves a mark on visitors

By John Gaudi, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 04, 2015 8:30 AM NT Last Updated: Oct 04, 2015 8:30 AM NT



Ryan Merkuratsuk is just one of the Inuit bear guards hired to keep visitors safe in the Torngat Mountains. Guards are armed with rifles and also carry noise makers to scare off bears. (John Gaudi/CBC)

How do you describe the indescribable? I know it's clichéd, but words or pictures really can't do the Torngat Mountains National Park justice. You have to see it, and the meet the people, for yourself. To feel the immensity of the landscape and its rich history.

For many visitors, that means going on a pricey tour, or in my case, being lucky enough to visit the area during a media week. The national park is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

We stayed at the Torngat Mountains base camp, which is the gateway into the national park. The camp is surrounded by a 10,000-volt electric fence to keep wildlife out. Big bears, not afraid of humans, roam the rocky tundra. Polar bears are at the top of the food chain.

At night, the sky is lit up by dazzling northern lights. A travel writer, taking part in media week, mused that the base camp switched them on for guests.

Feels at home

The Torngat Mountains are the ancestral lands of the Labrador Inuit. Maria Merkuratsuk who grew up on the land outside of Nain has strong ties here. We'd travelled to North Arm by boat, a trip that takes you through a spectacular fjord with ancient mountains rising up to more than 3,000 feet above you, to a place where Arctic char is plentiful.

The Torngats really are a special place. It feels good to only leave footprints behind. -
John Gaudi

Working as a bear guard, and with a rifle at the ready, Merkuratsuk tells me about her mother growing up in nearby Nachvak Brook trapping animals like foxes.

Merkuratsuk says she feels at home, and at peace, in the Torngats. She wants her grandchildren to know this place, too.

We see sail boats moored off of Big Island. Parks Canada staff, and armed Inuit bear guards, set out in a zodiac to check in with them.

Funny what an approaching boat, full of guys with guns, looks like. But no pirate attack here. The boaters were invited onto the island.

Parks Canada's Gary Baikie took a group out to explore Big Island, walking in single file so as not to disturb archaeological sites. He explains a circular Inuit tent ring we see could be 2,000 years old. Archaeological sites in Saglek Bay span more than 5,000.

There are many stories to tell. Jenny and Joseph Merkuratsuk are the care-takers of Hebron, a Moravian Mission that dates back to the 1830s. The province relocated the community in 1959, a move Inuit elders still have a difficult time talking about.

A special place

Each summer, Jenny and Joseph show visitors around the church and mission house — a national historic site —which is currently being restored. Their son, Julius, is one of the carpenters. The past echoes inside these walls: a chair once used by a minister, hand-painted German wall paper, a Christmas tree stand.

Scrambling to the top of a steep ridge, I looked out over a harbour where minke whales play. Our Inuit bear guard, Ryan Merkuratsuk, had even come across a camera case on the way up with teeth marks on it.

In one direction, the base camp looks like a miniature village; in another, Saglek Bay and mountains in the national park stretch out in full grandeur beyond.

The Torngats really are a special place. It feels good to only leave footprints behind.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/picture-perfect-torngat-mountains-national-park-leaves-a-mark-on-visitors-1.3254350>

Walking trail promotes health and safety in Maskwacis

Sarah O. Swenson/Wetaskiwin Times

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 2:03:46 MDT PM



Elder Margaret Montour, centre, leads the way following the ribbon cutting at the opening of a new walking trail at Samson Cree Nation Oct. 1.

It's been a project three years in the making, but the new walking trail at Samson Cree Nation is now complete.

A ribbon cutting and opening ceremony were hosted under clear blue skies at Maskwacis Oct. 1.

Project manager Tina Northwest began research for the trail in 2012. In 2013, planning began and an agreement with Alberta Transportation was reached to begin construction.

There was a lull in construction in 2014 before resuming this year.

"I'm a student and this was a project I used as part of my credits, so I tried to use a lot of indigenous methodology," said Northwest, who is completing her degree in indigenous studies.

The trail is a little more than six kilometres long, running from the Maskwacis RCMP detachment building and heading east along Hwy. 611, ending at Five Mile Road. The project cost a bit less than \$500,000 to complete.

The trail is currently gravel, but there are plans to have it paved next year.

"That's the plan," said Northwest. "And we have to decide if we want to extend it further; the original plan was to go about 9.5 kilometres."

Northwest said she is proud of how the project came together and has enjoyed working in community development.

"It feels really good to have this done. It was a lot of work and I really had no idea what trail building entailed," admitted Northwest. "Safety was our main concern in building this, but also health, wellness, spirituality, and reconnecting with the land as a community."

Samson Cree Nation Chief Kurt Buffalo agreed with that sentiment, calling the trail a vision of re-connection and connecting people back to Mother Earth.

“We’ve been disconnected for so long,” said Buffalo. “We’re here today because of people that wish our community to prosper and move ahead. It’s about reintroducing our people back to the gift of life and how precious that is.

Mayor Bill Elliot brought greetings and congratulations from the city.

“It will provide generations of citizens...with a chance to experience the natural world,” said Elliot. “There are a great many benefits to walking, including enhanced physical fitness, mental health, and community connection.”

Elliot noted the opening of the trail is evidence of the community’s desire to build a community of increased inclusive mobility, lower crime, and special planning to promote a culture of walking; all values shared by the City and reflected when council signed a walkable communities charter at its last meeting.

“Your community has embraced these ideas and we look forward to working together on walkable projects in the future.”

Northwest and other project affiliates have expressed a desire to expand the Samson Cree Trail to other communities. In years to come, they hope to connect trails to Ponoka and Wetaskiwin and hook up to the TransCanada trail.

The trail will host its first event this weekend, with the Turkey Trot walk on Oct. 10 at 10 a.m.

Direct Link: <http://www.wetaskiwintimes.com/2015/10/06/walking-trail-promotes-health-and-safety-in-maskwacis>

New Vital Signs report busts 'myths' about Edmonton's aboriginal population

[Elise Stolte, Edmonton Journal](#)

Published on: October 6, 2015 | Last Updated: October 6, 2015 11:07 AM MDT



First Nations people march down Jasper Avenue in the ceremonial Walk of Reconciliation from the Shaw Conference Centre to the Legislature after the close of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Edmonton on Sunday, March 30, 2014. Evan Buhler / Edmonton Journal

A new Vital Signs report on Edmonton's aboriginal population is an exercise in "myth busting," says Susan Morrissey, head of the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Their annual report runs in the *Edmonton Journal* on Tuesday.

This year, researchers pulled together numbers on Edmonton's First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Data on the improvements they found are breaking down stereotypes, said Morrissey.

"Many are completing high school and working," she said. "Overall, the income tax they're paying is actually higher than what they pull in from social assistance."

A 2010 study from Statistics Canada found the aboriginal population here collectively received 12 per cent of their income from provincial and federal subsidies. That compares to the 15 per cent of their earnings that they collectively paid in income tax.

That runs counter to what some Edmonton residents believe about their neighbours. A 2015 Leger Poll found half of Edmonton residents agreed with the statement that most aboriginal people do not take advantage of the various programs available to them.

The council, which publishes the annual Vital Signs report with the Edmonton Community Foundation, also found that high school completion is increasing.

Edmonton Catholic saw the percentage of aboriginal students who finished high school in three years reach 50 per cent in 2013 from just 26 per cent in 2009. Edmonton Public was not as dramatic, but saw its percentage jump to 27 per cent from 22 per cent in the same time.

Statistics Canada measured the number of aboriginal people who finish high school by age 25 as nearly 76 per cent in 2011, up from 62 per cent in 2001.



Const. Lisa Wolfe (left) instructs a recruit in this 2007 file photo. Candace Elliott / Edmonton Journal

“We haven’t seen that push for a long time,” said Const. Lisa Wolfe, a Métis officer who’s been with the Edmonton Police Service for 22 years. She’s in recruitment, and it used to be difficult to find enough candidates with their basic high school certificates.

That’s changed. There’s a will to pursue both high school and post-secondary learning, she said. “The resources out there for them are better than they were 10 years ago, way better than they were 20 years ago.”

“When I talk about hope, I talk about where the kids are going now.”

The aboriginal community is still overrepresented in the justice system, in the homeless population and among children in care. But in 2011, 52 per cent of the population 25 and older had a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, up from 39 per cent in 2001.

“It’s just starting to filter through,” said Wolfe, who was also part of the planning council’s advisory committee.

“Just the last three years, we’re really started to see that push of kids starting to graduate high school. They’re stable, they have aspirations and they have dreams. That’s what we want to see in our community. To see them achieve that blesses the rest of the community.”

Direct Link: <http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/new-vital-signs-report-busts-myths-about-edmontons-aboriginal-population>

Why can’t we get clean water to First Nation reserves?

Boil-water advisories are in place in 93 First Nations communities, for complex reasons—and Justin Trudeau’s five-year goal to end them may be ‘unrealistic’

[Cathy Gulli](#)

October 7, 2015



The remains of a Canadian flag can be seen flying over a building in Attawapiskat, Ont. on November 29, 2011. The federal government is forcing the troubled Attawapiskat First Nation to pay a private-sector consultant about \$1,300 a day to run its finances – even though the government’s own assessments say the third-party management system is not cost-effective. (Adrian Wyld/CP)

Lalita Bharadwaj is a toxicologist and associate professor of public health at the University of Saskatchewan, who specializes in human-health risk assessment in rural populations. Bharadwaj co-authored a recent study, published in the *Canadian Water Resources Journal* in September, examining the “quantifiable progress” of First Nations water-management strategies across the country between 2001 and 2013. She spoke to *Maclean’s* from Saskatoon one day after Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau promised to end boil-water advisories on First Nation reserves within five years, if elected prime minister. Today, 93 First Nations communities must boil their water for one minute before drinking or using it. In some places, such as Neskantaga First Nation in Ontario, this has been going on for more than two decades.

Q: What are your thoughts on Trudeau’s commitment to end all boil-water advisories within five years, if elected?

A: Based on our research, there have been over 10 years of policies developed from 2001 to 2013, and it’s clearly shown that the approaches have not yet made a difference within the First Nations communities. To promise to end boil-water advisories within a five-year period is just not a realistic goal.

Q: In what sense? What would need to happen for that to be realized?

A: There needs to be an understanding that we have 600 First Nations [communities] and they are not homogenous, and one top-down approach will not address the issue. There need to be more individual consultations with each community. The population is different, the geographical location is varied, [as is] the leadership, the number of people [needed] to facilitate human resources toward the management of water. I could go on.

Q: How does water management actually operate now for communities on reserves?

A: The federal government has fiduciary responsibility for First Nations, whereas the provincial governments basically manage and govern water resources. So when you look at First Nations and their relationship with the federal government, there aren't the mechanisms that are set up in the provincial sphere to manage drinking water. So basically, First Nations are left in a vacuum.

Q: You say Trudeau's promise is unrealistic. How could he be imagining this is possible?

A: I'm not sure how Mr. Trudeau has come up with this idea, because the causes are so complex. It could be because the treatment system doesn't work, or it's ineffective to treat the water. It could be because the raw water source is contaminated. It could be because the pressure within the piping is not allowing for the delivery of pressurized water to the house, and that would affect the chlorination process. There are a number of factors.

Related: [A real nation wouldn't let this happen](#)

Q: Your study looks at the “quantifiable progress of the First Nations water management strategy” between 2001 and 2013. What does it show?

A: It's an unfortunate situation. We have not made any improvements, even though billions of dollars have been put in place to resolve the issue.

Q: What improvements haven't been made?

A: Improvements in infrastructure, in technical ability and capacity in training, in addressing high-risk communities. Really, if you go through the results section of that paper, you'll notice that a lot of the information is missing in whether the outcomes have been met by the plans and policies put in place.

Q: If we're looking at the number of boil-water advisories over the years, are there fewer? Would that be a measure of success, or lack of success?

A: In June 2014, there were 92 boil-water advisories; if you look at Health Canada's website today, you'll see there are 93 communities under boil-water advisories. Again, the factors contributing to boil-water advisories vary, and it is not clear how those advisories are being measured.

Q: What have been the barriers to making improvements? Why hasn't all the money that's been spent made a difference?

A: One of the big issues, in my opinion, is that we don't recognize First Nations as unique groups of individuals; the issues around water are not the same for each community. As a result, money being spent, for example, to increase training or education about how to operate a water system may work for some communities but not others. Another example [is] geographic location and remoteness: Putting money toward a treatment plant may work for one community, but not another, where it may break all the time because of permafrost.

Q: A number of audits over the years have shown confusion over responsibility for water provision. That's a big problem.

A: You have Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, who provide 80 per cent of funding toward water-treatment systems and infrastructure for First Nations communities. The chief and council need to provide 20 per cent. Then you have the role of Health Canada, who will monitor the drinking-water supply. But also, there are roles within First Nations where you have environmental health officers [who] may be employed through the tribal council, and who might be employed through Health Canada, also conducting water-quality assessment. And in some of the research that we've been doing recently, we've noted that there has not been consistent annual monitoring of First Nations water supply. And then, [for] raw water, there is Environment Canada. So when you think about it, water regulation and governance involves multi-institutions and is fragmented, because the individual government agencies don't talk to each other.

Q: What is the consequence of inconsistent monitoring?

A: Inconsistent monitoring, at least in my opinion, will pose a health risk.

Q: Do we know if, or how many, First Nations people have died because of contaminated water?

A: We don't have those numbers.

Q: Could it have happened?

A: Yes, it could have happened.

Q: How real is that threat?

A: I think it's a real threat. If you look at the health statistics, there are a lot of young people on First Nations, and if, for example, a communication of a microbial risk isn't provided to that community, there could be exposure to young children who are more vulnerable. Also, elderly people who have compromised immune systems would also be at higher risk.

Q: Are those data tracked?

A: I don't have those data. I don't know if they are available, and how accurate they could be. From a practical and logistic perspective, it is difficult to track a water-borne illness unless it is specifically doctor-diagnosed, where you see a sudden spike in individuals presenting with diarrhea or vomiting, because you need to link that exposure to drinking water to the clinical diagnosis. It's often difficult to do that, even in the general population, unless you see an outbreak.

Q: So what needs to happen before communities are no longer under boil-water advisories?

A: I think what needs to be done is that all agencies responsible for water need to come to the table. That includes the federal government and the provincial government. It includes all agencies related to health, environment and, obviously, First Nations.

Direct Link: <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/why-cant-we-get-clean-water-to-first-nation-reserves/>

Western Nunavut youth, elders grapple with tough topics at CamBay meeting

Elder abuse, lack of support for youth focus of KIA presentations

JANE GEORGE, October 08, 2015 - 11:09 am



Delegates at the Kitikmeot Inuit Association give elder Annie Neglak a standing ovation after at the Oct. 7 elders presentation during the KIA annual general meeting in Cambridge Bay. (PHOTO BY JANE GEORGE)



Kitikmeot Inuit Association youth delegate Talia Maksagak of Cambridge Bay, at left, speaks Oct. 7 during the youth presentation at the KIA annual general meeting in Cambridge Bay. (PHOTO BY JANE GEORGE)

CAMBRIDGE BAY — Elder Annie Neglak of Cambridge Bay says she no longer wants to head to the local stores after the monthly pension cheques arrive at the post office.

“Adults and grandchildren cling to them so they can [take their money and] support their bad habits of alcohol or drugs,” said Neglak during an Oct. 7 presentation on elders’ concerns at the Kitikmeot Inuit Association’s annual general meeting in Cambridge Bay.

Bootleggers and dope-dealers also go straight to elders’ homes to sell them booze and drugs after the money comes in, Neglak said.

Overcome with emotion as spoke, Neglak said she was speaking to the AGM on behalf of those elders who aren’t able to speak up for themselves — “I have to voice it,” she told the gathering.

Among the instances of abuse cited by Neglak — a disabled elder whose niece and nephew take his pension every month.

The abuse that Neglak sees does not take place only in Cambridge Bay either, but everywhere, she said, asking people to speak up when they become aware of elder abuse.

“I have to bring it out,” Neglak, [the recipient of the 2012 Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Nunavut](#) said.

“I might as well have a cancer because it eats at me like a cancer. It has to be said if I want our Nunavut to be happy, and our communities and our families.”

Delegates at the KIA rose to give Neglak a standing ovation after she finished speaking.

Elder Catherine Qirnguk of Kugaaruk said people in her community would like a bank so elders could do direct deposit of their pension cheques and “stop our children, grandchild from cashing our cheques.”

The elders also said they need:

- interpreters at southern health care facilities because elders are sent out for medical care without an escort because they can understand English, but not well enough to understand medical terms;
- more home care in Kitikmeot communities;
- elders vehicles;
- more housing — because in one Kitikmeot community four elderly women live in a one-bedroom unit; and,
- more cultural programs.

Curbing drugs and alcohol in communities were likewise among the concerns raised in the presentations of women and youth to the KIA AGM.

Youth also spoke about the need to focus on healthy relationships to improve conditions in the communities.

“Many youth get into relationships at an alarmingly young age and have difficulty understanding what the responsibilities and roles of being in a relationship are. This is a major health concern,” said Talia Maksagak of Cambridge Bay.

“Too many young people are having unprotected sex resulting in a lot of young girls getting pregnant when they aren’t ready to provide financial, emotional, and mental

support to their children because they are still in school or have dropped out and have no job qualifications.”

Maksagak also said the lack of programs for youth remains a big issue in every community.

“If there were more programs devoted to the different ways to cope with stress, loss, puberty, changes and balancing work, school and social life, the rate of unfortunate events [like suicide] will decrease drastically,” she said.

“A nice chat with an elder can cheer up the youth, or to hear stories from the past on how our ancestors lived makes a big impact on the youth of the 21st century in a positive way.”

To that, elder Bernadette Utaq of Taloyoak responded that she can’t talk to her grandchildren because they don’t speak a common language.

Elders have failed in giving youth support and pass on the language, she said: “It’s us, the elders... the parents are to blame for this situation.”

But Sarah Jancke, KIA’s program coordinator for women and youth, said it’s important not to assign blame, but to move forward.

Resolutions stemming from the youth, women and elders presentations at the KIA AGM will guide the organization’s work in the coming year.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674western_nunavut_youth_elders_grapple_with_tough_topics_at_cambay_meet/

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Charges pending in alleged ballot box burning on Poundmaker Cree Nation

Video shows ballot boxes being kicked across parking lot

Oct 02, 2015 11:55 AM CT [*CBC News*](#)

RCMP say charges are pending after a ballot box was tampered with earlier this week on the Poundmaker Cree Nation, near North Battleford, Sask.

A video shows two people taking a ballot box and kicking it across a parking lot. It was then allegedly set on fire, according to the person who sent the video to CBC.

A 34-year-old man was arrested shortly after the incident and has since been released. Charges are pending against that man.

Police are also searching for a 35-year-old man in connection to the incident.

RCMP say the incident happened during a band by-election, although the motive isn't exactly clear.

People from the First Nation told CBC News that they didn't agree with the election, saying it went against the rules.

Disagreements over money

The Poundmaker Cree Nation has struggled with disagreements over money for years. In 2012, [Chief Duane Antoine pleaded guilty to theft](#), before running again for chief and being re-elected. Two others were also convicted on the theft charge.

Consequences unclear

The Poundmaker Cree Nation wouldn't talk to CBC News for this story. They only said "no comment," before hanging up. They also refused requests to speak to the electoral office.

While police are investigating this case, it's unclear what the consequences are for tampering with votes in an election on a First Nation.

According to Elections Canada, hampering or delaying the electoral process in a federal election is an offence punishable by a fine, prison time or both.

Elections Saskatchewan says if someone is convicted of tampering with ballot papers in a provincial election, that person is disqualified from voting for the next five years. A citizen can also be imprisoned for up to one year. An election officer can face two years.

With files from Tory Gillis

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/m/news/canada/saskatchewan/topstories/charges-pending-in-alleged-ballot-box-burning-on-poundmaker-cree-nation-1.3253267>

Professor says aboriginal accused at risk for wrongful conviction

By Barb Pacholik, Leader-Post October 2, 2015



A copy of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Wrongful Conviction of David Milgaard, released in Saskatoon, Sask., on Sept. 26, 2008. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Geoff Howe

REGINA — From investigators with “tunnel vision” to non-representative juries, problems in the justice system put aboriginal people at risk of wrongful conviction, says a law and justice professor speaking in Regina Friday.

“One per cent of all convictions are wrongful — as in the criminal justice system gets it wrong,” said Myles McLellan, noting the estimate is based primarily on U.S. studies. By that measure, some 2,000 people in Canada each year are convicted of crimes they didn’t commit — and aboriginal people can be particularly vulnerable, he contended.

A professor at Algoma University in Sault St. Marie, Ont., McLellan was among those making presentations this week at a national conference titled Justice at the Crossroads, organized by the Canadian Criminal Justice Association.

McLellan noted a number of public inquiries across this country — including the David Milgaard inquiry in Saskatoon — have identified essentially seven “systemic causes” of wrongful conviction in Canada: Mistaken eyewitness identification, false confessions, tunnel vision by the police and prosecutors, perjured testimony by jailhouse informants, Crown misconduct, inadequate defence, and faulty forensic science. To that list, McLellan would add non-representative juries.

“Juries that have absolutely no minority representation to a great degree convict those who are minorities. So that’s a systemic failure,” argued McLellan.

McLellan had hoped the case of an Ontario man convicted of manslaughter by an all-white jury might lead to changes in the jury system. However, this spring — “to my surprise,” said McLellan — the Supreme Court overturned a lower-court ruling that had agreed there was a problem with how the panel of prospective jurors was compiled.

But the country's top court found that so long as there's fair opportunity for a broad cross-section of society to participate in the jury process, the actual composition of the jury at the end doesn't matter. "To a great degree, that means provincial governments don't have a very serious obligation to make sure that aboriginal Canadians are appropriately represented on juries," said McLellan.

Four of the identified wrongful conviction factors — mistaken identification, false confessions, tunnel vision, and inadequate defence counsel — particularly impact aboriginal accused, he said. In addition, race, poverty, substance abuse and mental health issues play a role in almost all wrongful convictions — "and those factors are endemic to aboriginal society," he added.

McLellan said mistaken eyewitness identification is the leading cause of wrongful conviction, with some studies blaming it for 78 to 80 per cent of all such cases. "Cross racial identification" — for example, a Caucasian store clerk picking out an aboriginal robber — is even more difficult, he added.

McLellan said people who are actually innocent have confessed to a crime for a variety of reasons, including coercion, mental impairment, intoxication, and misunderstanding. But one problem that can arise particularly with an aboriginal accused is a "culture clash."

"In aboriginal society, there's a great emphasis on taking responsibility for one's actions," said McLellan. But being responsible isn't necessarily the same as being legally guilty. For example, a person may act in self-defence, but an aboriginal accused is more likely to plead guilty regardless.

McLellan noted aboriginal accused are also less likely to get bail, at the same time more inmates are waiting longer on remand — leading some to plead guilty to shorten their stay behind bars. "Something's obviously wrong," he said.

McLellan said "tunnel vision" — with police or prosecutors prematurely settling on a suspect and ignoring contradictory evidence — is also a prevalent factor in wrongful convictions. "Overpolicing" is part of that, targeting people of a different ethnic or racial background, he said.

Regarding defence representation, a Manitoba inquiry found aboriginal accused spent less time with their lawyer and more often appeared in court without legal representation.

McLellan's suggestions to help address wrongful conviction issues include "double blind" photo line-ups so that even the police officer doesn't know which photo is the suspect; disallowing any confession that isn't video-recorded; better funding for legal aid; and ensuring more aboriginal people are on juries.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/news/professor+says+aboriginal+accused+risk+wrongful+conviction/11410305/story.html>

First Nations student deaths inquest: 7 youths died in 10 years

Inquest, which begins Monday, will be one of the largest in Ontario's history

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 03, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 05, 2015 11:46 AM ET



The seven students who have died in Thunder Bay since 2000 are, from top left, Jethro Anderson, 15, Curran Strang, 18, Paul Panacheese, 17, Robyn Harper, 18, Reggie Bushie, 15, Kyle Morriseau, 17, and Jordan Wabasse, 15. (CBC)

A joint inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations students begins Oct. 5 in Thunder Bay, Ont.

All of the students died between 2000 and 2011 while attending high school in the city, hundreds of kilometres away from their remote First Nations where access to education is limited.

Three of them were just 15 years old when their bodies were pulled from a local river. Two other teens are suspected of drowning while two more may have overdosed. The inquest is expected to fully examine the circumstances of their deaths and make recommendations to prevent others.

The inquest is expected to hear from about 200 witnesses and is scheduled to run until March 2016.

Here's what we know about the youths whose deaths prompted one of the largest inquests in Ontario's history:

Jethro Anderson, Kasabonika Lake First Nation



"Everyone should know that Jethro was a kind, soft-spoken kid who respected his parents," Jethro's mother Stella Anderson said in a prepared statement. "He never spoke back to us."

"The kindness and respect he showed me is what helps me when I remember my son," she added.

Jethro was a student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations High School in Thunder Bay when he went missing in 2000. His body was found in the Kaministiquia River. He was 15.

Curran Strang, Pikangikum First Nation



Curran was a student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations High School when he went missing in 2005. His body was found in the McIntyre River.

He was 18.

His family is the only family without legal representation at the inquest.

Paul Panacheese, Mishkeegogamang First Nation



Paul was 21 years old and a student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations High School when he died in 2006. Some reports have said that he died of an overdose but the cause is still uncertain.

"We don't know exactly how Paul died but it has been almost nine years and we are still waiting for some answers," his mother Maryanne Panacheese said in a prepared statement. "It is our hope that the inquest will help us to understand more."

She said Paul wanted better access to education for all First Nations students.

Robyn Harper, Keewaywin First Nation



Robyn was 18 years old when she died in 2007, just days after starting classes at Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations High School.

She is alleged to have died of an overdose, but some people who knew her, question that.

Reggie Bushie, Poplar Hill First Nation



Reggie was 15 years old when he went missing in 2007. He was a student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty First Nations High School.

His body was found in the McIntyre River.

His death prompted the call for an inquest.

Kyle Morriseau, Keewaywin First Nation



Kyle was the second student from Keewawaywin to die while at school in Thunder Bay. He was 17 years old when he went missing in 2009.

His body was found in the McIntyre River.

Jordan Wabasse, Webequie First Nation



Jordan was 15 years old when he moved to Thunder Bay with "dreams of playing serious hockey in a bigger league than he could from Webequie First Nation," said his mother Bernice Jacobs.

He was a student at the Matawa Learning Centre.

He went missing on Feb 7, 2011. His body was found in the Kaministiquia River three months later.

'System continues to fail these families'

The joint inquest was first called in 2012, but delays were caused by a problem with Ontario's jury system that did not have a standard way of ensuring that First Nations people who live on reserve are called for jury duty.

That problem has been fixed temporarily by allowing First Nations people to volunteer as inquest jurors.

The inquest is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. ET on Monday at the Thunder Bay courthouse.

Late Friday afternoon, the Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation said he is concerned about the courtroom selected for the inquest, which is small and has room for only 10 observers.

"You know we have lots of room for First Nations peoples in jails," Alvin Fidler said, alluding to the [over-representation of indigenous people in Canada's prisons](#). "But when it comes to access to the courtroom, there's no room at all."

The coroner's office said another room will be made available in the courthouse for observers to watch the proceedings on a television screen. The inquest will also be streamed live online for those who cannot attend.

"I think it is unacceptable for families that have waited for a long time for this inquiry to go and sit somewhere else while this hearing is taking place," Fiddler said. "I think it just reinforces for me just how this system continues to fail these families."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-inquest-student-deaths-1.3255052>

Inquest begins into deaths of 7 First Nations youth in Thunder Bay

Families of the seven, who were studying far from their remote northern homes, are dismayed by the few seats reserved for them at hearing.



Alvin Fiddler, grand chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, said the lack of seating in the main inquest room for all the parents and families of the seven dead youth is "disgusting."

By: [Tanya Talaga](#) Global Economics Reporter, Published on Mon Oct 05 2015

After a three-year wait, an inquest into the mysterious deaths of seven First Nations youth who lost their lives while living far from home as they attended high school in Thunder Bay begins Monday.

The broad inquest, presided over by Dr. David Eden, will be one of the largest ever to be held in Ontario. Teams of lawyers representing various interests are expected to call nearly 200 witnesses until March 2016.

The [inquest was called](#) after a [Star series on the lack of investigation](#) into deaths of the six males and one female who died between 2000 and 2011. Three of them — Reggie

Bushie, Jethro Anderson and Jordan Wabasse — were only 15 years old. The others were Curran Strang, 18, Paul Panacheese, 21, Robyn Harper, 18, and Kyle Morrisseau, 17.

Each came from remote First Nations in the north, and each had to move to Thunder Bay in order to attend an appropriate high school.

On Friday, the families of the lost youth were shocked to learn that the room chosen in the new Thunder Bay courthouse for the hearing is quite small, and that just 10 seats will be available at the back for the seven families, their supporters and members of the public.

An overflow room has been set up inside the building, but for Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, this is not an acceptable solution.

“This is disgusting,” Fiddler said. “The parents and families of the seven have the right to be in the room (as the inquest proceeds).”

“There is lots of room in the jails for our people,” he said. “Yet when our community tries to access the justice system, there are barriers in the way.”

(Only 4 per cent of Canada’s population is indigenous, but nearly 23 per cent of Canada’s prison population hails from an aboriginal background.)

Prominent politician Bob Rae and novelist Joseph Boyden quickly took to social media to denounce the lack of accommodation for the families.

“Fix this now,” tweeted Rae, Ontario’s former premier and a previous leader of the federal Liberals.

“Courts sure make plenty of room for FN in jail cells. Victims families’ can’t attend,” tweeted Boyden, author of award-winning books, including *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*.

It has been nearly 15 years since Jethro Anderson’s body was found in the Kaministiquia River in Thunder Bay.

Jethro’s mother, Stella Anderson, said the inquest will be difficult in many ways, given such a long passage of time.

“Half of me wants to know what happened to Jethro, and the other half of me wants to leave it alone,” she said in a statement through the family’s lawyer, Christa Big Canoe with Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto.

“The day that Jethro’s body was found and I heard the news, my heart shattered into a million pieces,” Anderson said.

“I miss Jethro every day and the thought of learning more about his death is frightening and brings up old wounds that have been slowly healing,” she said.

For aspiring hockey player Jordan Wabasse’s mom Bernice Jacobs, the hope is that the inquest will focus on the lack of educational choices for aboriginal youth.

“Our two other sons are now in high school in Webequie,” Jacobs said in a statement. “There is no science lab, no mechanical shop, no art and no music courses available. My one son is taking only two courses because he has already completed all of the available courses for his grade.”

Yet after Jordan’s death, Jacobs said, she can’t bring herself to let her eldest surviving son attend school in Thunder Bay, 500 kilometres from the remote First Nation.

Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day credited the “tenacity” of the northern First Nations, who pushed the province for the inquest. Determined leaders of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation “refused to let go questions that must be answered to why the numbers of lost lives in that region of Ontario are youth from northern First Nations communities.”

The inquest was supposed to begin in 2012 but faced many delays, one caused by the lack of aboriginal people on the inquest jury.

This lack of First Nations participation in the justice system — whether on trial or inquest juries — was the [subject of a major report](#) by former Supreme Court justice Frank Iacobucci. It was also the subject of a Supreme Court challenge.

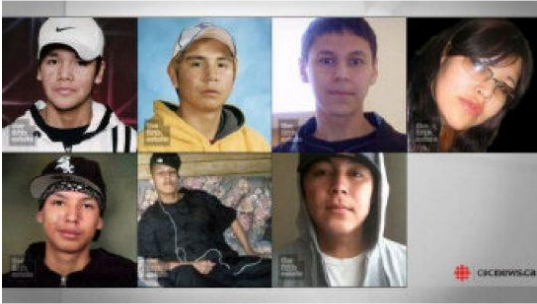
Inquests are intended to investigate problems and figure out how to prevent future deaths. They cannot assign fault or blame.

The inquest will be live-streamed on the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services website.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/10/05/inquest-begins-into-deaths-of-7-first-nations-youth-in-thunder-bay.html>

‘Long pathway’ ahead for jurors at inquest into deaths of aboriginal students

A cramped courtroom prompts complaints; the presiding coroner urges participants to respond to anticipated differences “with wisdom not with anger.” Inquest is examining the deaths of young people who left reserves to attend high school.



A CBC screen grab showing the faces of the seven young aboriginals whose deaths the inquest is looking into.

By: [Tanya Talaga](#) Global Economics Reporter, Published on Mon Oct 05 2015

After beginning in a Thunder Bay court room too small to accommodate the families of seven dead students, the [inquest](#) into the students' deaths heard testimony of what is known to have happened to each on their final days.

The seven First Nations students all tragically lost their lives while living hundreds of kilometers away from their communities. The students had no choice but to leave home in order to seek an appropriate high school education.

Four women and a man make up the jury of what is one of Ontario's largest inquests, which started Monday. It is expected to last until March 2016 and hear from 200 witnesses.

Family members had to vie for one of 10 seats set aside for members of the public. There was an overflow room and the inquest was broadcast live stream, but First Nations leaders argued families had the right to be present in the courtroom as the proceedings took place.

Dr. David Eden, the presiding coroner, announced the inquest would move to a larger room on Tuesday. He also cautioned the jury that they were embarking on a "long pathway" and that it is also everyone's job to manage those differences with wisdom and not with anger.

The inquest was called after a [Star series](#) on the lack of investigation into deaths of the six males and one female who lost their lives between 2000 and 2011. Reggie Bushie, Jethro Anderson and Jordan Wabasse were only 15 years old. The other students were Curran Strang, 18, Paul Panacheese, 21, Robyn Harper, 18, and Kyle Morrisseau, 17.

Coroner's counsel Trevor Jukes said the inquest would be held in three phases due to its size and the amount of material that needs to be covered.

The first phase would hear of the deaths of Panacheese and Harper. Both were found dead at home.

It is unclear why Panacheese died, the inquest heard.

Panacheese began his studies at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in 2003 at age 18. When he died on Nov. 11, 2006, the Mishkeegogamang First Nation student was living with his mother, Maryanne, who had moved to Thunder Bay.

Panacheese died after a night socializing with friends, first at home and then out briefly. Close to 1 a.m., he returned home and was let in by his mother, who then went to bed upstairs. Paul stayed up to make something to eat and watch TV. Maryanne heard a crash, went downstairs, saw her son and called 911, the inquest heard.

Robyn Harper, also a Dennis Franklin Cromarty student, died on Jan., 13, 2007, just days after arriving in Thunder Bay. Harper was boarding with a Thunder Bay family so she could attend high school.

The inquest heard that Harper met friends at the mall. They got alcohol and went to a park. There is later video footage of her stumbling at a bus shelter. She was taken to the home she boarded at by a shuttle service set up to watch out for First Nations youth in distress.

Harper was left at the home and it was later ruled she died of acute alcohol toxicity.

The inquest also heard the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Anderson, Strang, Bushie, Morrisseau and Wabasse — the last to die. The boys were all found in and around the waterways surrounding Thunder Bay.

Phase two of the inquest will focus on the broader evidence and trying to put what is going on behind the scenes in a broader context, said Jukes. That includes Canada's troubled residential school legacy and how that is "relevant to what we are talking about today," he told the inquest.

Nearly 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were taken from their homes and sent to residential schools that were largely run by churches and funded by the Canadian government for almost a century.

Phase three will deal with trying to come up with recommendations to how to prevent this from happening again. "We tried to organize things the best we can," Jukes said.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler said outside of the courtroom that it was "unacceptable" that after many years of effort and continual delays the joint inquest was launched without adequate accommodation for the families.

"The justice system that has failed these youth and their families throughout this process and continues to fail by opening one of the largest inquests in Ontario in one of the smallest courtrooms imaginable," Fiddler said. "It is outrageous that insufficient provision was made to accommodate these grieving families on this very difficult day,

and forces us to ask what accommodations would have been made if the victims were anyone but aboriginal youth.”

NAN is a political organization representing 49 First Nations communities in northern Ontario.

This inquest has had many stops and starts. Ontario first announced an inquest into Bushie’s death but eventually the other students were included.

The inquest was set to begin again in 2012 but faced many delays, one caused by the lack of aboriginal people on the inquest jury.

This lack of aboriginal participation in the justice system was the subject of a major report by former Supreme Court justice Frank Iacobucci and it was also a Supreme Court challenge.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/10/05/tensions-in-evidence-as-inquest-begins-into-deaths-of-7-aboriginal-youths.html>

First Nations chief accuses B.C. premier of 'double standard' in teen's death



An exterior view of the British Columbia Legislature is shown in Victoria, B.C., on August 26, 2011. (Darryl Dyck / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

The Canadian Press

Published Tuesday, October 6, 2015 9:13AM EDT

VANCOUVER -- The chief of a Fraser Valley First Nation is accusing B.C. Premier Christy Clark of practising a "double standard" of accountability in the death of an 18-year-old man in government care.

Alex Gervais fell from a fourth-floor window of an Abbotsford hotel on Sept. 18, and children's representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has said it's believed he killed himself.

Chief Tyrone McNeil of the Sto:Lo Tribal Council says in a letter to a legislative committee that Clark vowed consequences for an aboriginal agency she accused of not following policy in Gervais's death.

But McNeil says Clark is refusing to hold social workers and a director at the Ministry of Children and Family Development accountable in a case where children were sexually abused by their father.

McNeil says the premier defends social workers who fail to protect children but then vows consequences when an aboriginal agency is involved.

He says a legislative committee must refer the case to the children's representative for an investigation because Clark's comments have corrupted a review of Gervais's death.

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/first-nations-chief-accuses-b-c-premier-of-double-standard-in-teen-s-death-1.2597141>

Judge orders Corrections Canada to deal with culturally biased testing of Aboriginal inmates

[Investigates](#) | October 5, 2015 by [Paul Barnsley](#) |



Paul Barnsley

APTN Investigates

VANCOUVER — A Federal Court judge has ordered Correctional Services of Canada

(CSC) to stop using its standard psychological risk assessment on violent Aboriginal offenders.

According to a ruling written by Justice Michael L. Phelan on Sept. 18, Canada is lagging behind other countries in its efforts to eliminate bias.

Phelan ordered CSC to stop using its standard psychological risk assessment tests on Jeffrey G. Ewart and to return to court in 30 days to tell the court how it plans to conduct research “to assess the reliability of these psychological tests in respect to adult Aboriginal offenders.”

“This is not an issue that CSC missed inadvertently. It’s been a live issue since 2000, has been on CSC’s ‘radar screen’ and the subject of past court decisions where the court contemplated that some type of confirmatory research was being conducted,” the judge wrote. “It is time for the matter to be resolved.”

Ewart, 53, self-identifies as Metis and is recognized by CSC as an Aboriginal offender. He was adopted by a non-Aboriginal family at the age of six months. The judge wrote that his adopted family life was “tragic” with an alcoholic father, a mentally ill mother and racist, abusive siblings.

He has spent 30 years in federal institutions, almost half of that time in maximum security facilities and is now serving two life sentences: for second degree murder and attempted murder.

Ewart originally sued CSC for damages in 2006 and 2007, claiming that the tests used by CSC on prisoners were biased against Aboriginal people, which prevented him moving forward with his rehabilitation.

But he represented himself and was not successful at trial.

He’s been eligible for full parole since 1999. But he has refused to apply for parole, claiming the bias in the tests would find him too likely to re-offend and he would be turned down.

After failing in his first legal challenge, he retained Vancouver lawyer Jason Gratl to help get his complaints back in front of a judge. Gratl said CSC lawyers in Ewart’s previous legal action told the court their client would get to work on addressing the cultural bias in the tests.

Justice Phelan was clearly not pleased with the progress made by CSC since 2007. He noted Section 4 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, which governs the CSC, specifically requires that “correctional policies, programs and practices respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences and are responsive to the special needs of women, Aboriginal peoples, persons requiring mental health care and other groups.”

He then ruled the CSC was not complying with its governing legislation.

He also noted that several other countries have started to address the systemic discrimination against Indigenous people and it was time for Canada to get up to speed.

“Other countries, including the UK, the USA and Australia, have all conducted research to ensure that their psychological assessment tools are reliable in respect to cultural minorities,” he wrote.

The five tests that have been impugned are: Hare Psychopathy Checklist Revised [PCL-R], Violence Risk Appraisal Guide [V-RAG], Sex Offender Risk Appraisal Guide [SORAG], Static 99, Violence Risk Scale – Sex Offender [VRS-SO].

The judge found the expert testimony of Dr. Stephen Hart, a professor of psychology at Simon Fraser University who was called to testify on behalf of Ewart, to be persuasive.

Dr. Hart testified the tests were developed, in some cases decades ago, without considering Aboriginal cultures or perspectives. He also said there are ways psychiatrists can analyze the tests to rule out cross-cultural bias but CSC has not done that work.

“Because of the significant cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, the actuarial tests at issue in this action are more likely than not to be ‘cross-culturally variant,’” the judge wrote, summarizing Hart’s evidence.

Lawyer Jason Gratl was asked if this decision would have an effect in provincial jails as well as federal institutions.

“Oh yes,” he replied. “Not only the provincial prison system but also every aspect of the criminal justice system that relies on these types of standardized tests. For example, dangerous offender hearings typically rely on the PCL-R to assess whether an offender is so dangerous to the community that they ought not be released for an indefinite period of time.

The decision has given Gratl’s client hope that he might one day leave prison.

“Before, he had no hope in hell of getting out and now he’s got a chance. If he crosses his T’s and dots his I’s and stays on a narrow road, he’s got a decent chance of being released into day parole in two or three, maybe four years, whereas before the prison gates were closed to him permanently,” he said. “He would have died in jail.”

It will be easier now for Aboriginal prisoners who have committed violent acts to move from maximum to medium or even minimum security if they do the work, the lawyer said.

“Particularly for persons who are convicted of violent crimes, it’s standard fare for the authorities to administer risk appraisal tests upon entry into the prison system. So almost

every Aboriginal prisoner who has committed an offense involving violence is administered the PCL-R and the V-RAG and many of the prisoners are administered some of the other tests,” he said. “It’s super, super difficult to work out of a negative PCL-R result or a V-RAG result, until now. Because it’s supposed to be statistical, it’s supposed to be scientific, it’s supposed to be objective. It’s not just one psychologist’s opinion about whether a person is dangerous, it’s the opinion of science itself. And it’s very difficult to go against that.”

Other lawyers across the country have already taken note of this decision, he said.

“I’m seeing it’s already being raised. I’ve received emails from a couple of lawyers who are representing persons against whom DO [Dangerous Offender] proceedings are being brought where PCL-R plays a prominent role,” the lawyer said. “These things seem to track people’s lives. It has effect in the parole context, in dangerous offender applications and it may have other types of repercussions too.”

CSC declined to comment on the decision.

“The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is currently reviewing the Federal Court’s interim order and reasons for judgment. As this matter remains before the courts, it would be inappropriate for CSC to offer comment at this time,” CSC spokesperson Lori Halfper said in an emailed statement received Oct. 1.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/05/judge-orders-corrections-canada-to-deal-with-culturally-biased-testing-of-aboriginal-inmates/>

First Nations student deaths inquest in Thunder Bay hears arguments about alcohol

'Alcohol may be the canary in the coal mine, but not the cause' of students' deaths, lawyer says

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 07, 2015 7:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 07, 2015 7:00 AM ET



Jurors, lawyers and family members moved into one of the largest courtrooms in Thunder Bay on Tuesday to start day two of a coroner's inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations young people over the course of a decade. (Josh Lynn/CBC)

The second day of the inquest into the deaths of seven First Nations students in Thunder Bay had a smoother start than its opening day, but ended on a difficult note with questions about the relationship between alcohol use and some of the deaths.

The inquest is examining the circumstances of the deaths of seven young First Nations people who had left their remote communities to attend school in the city.

The proceedings on Tuesday began in one of the biggest courtrooms in Thunder Bay, in contrast to Monday's start which took place in one of the new building's smallest rooms.

Six months of inquiry began with testimony from forensic pathologist Dr. Toby Rose and forensic toxicologist Karen Woodall.

They went through each of the student deaths, listing their determinations of the cause of death, starting with Paul Panacheese.

The post mortem investigation could find no anatomical or toxicological cause of his death, so it is undetermined or unexplained. Rose said it is likely an underlying, hereditary heart condition, for which his close family members should also get tested.

Earlier this year, presiding coroner Dr. David Eden wrote in a ruling about the scope of the inquest that the 21-year-old's death "may have been related to chronic exposure to drugs and alcohol."

Rose's testimony dispelled that myth.

Relevance of alcohol questioned

Lawyers representing several parties at the inquest challenged the evidence that alcohol was relevant to the other deaths as well.

Woodall said the average concentration of alcohol that is considered fatal 360 mg alcohol per 100 mL of blood. None of the students who died exceeded that level.

Robyn Harper whose cause of death was determined to be "acute ethanol toxicity" had a blood alcohol concentration of 338mg/100mL.

Alcohol was determined as part of the cause of death in the drownings of Jethro Anderson, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morrisseau and Curran Strang. It was not listed as a cause in the death of Jordan Wabasse.

The inquest continues on Wednesday when jurors are scheduled to take a tour of Dennis Franklin Cromarty school. Six of the seven young people were students there when they died.

Here is a look at the some of the proceeding from the CBC reporter in the courtroom.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-student-deaths-inquest-in-thunder-bay-hears-arguments-about-alcohol-1.3259607>

Vancouver aboriginal street youth face higher incarceration rates, report says

Police have 'concerns' with the report's conclusions

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 07, 2015 2:02 PM PT Last Updated: Oct 07, 2015 6:06 PM PT



Vancouver's aboriginal street youth are 1.4 times more likely to be incarcerated than their non aboriginal counterparts, a new study says. (CBC)

Aboriginal street youth in Vancouver are 1.4 times more likely to be jailed than their non-aboriginal counterparts, according to a study released Wednesday by the [BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS](#).

The report, conducted by the centre's [Urban Health Research Initiative](#), said one explanation for the higher numbers could be that police may target aboriginal youth, but more research is needed.

"Given what we know about the destructive impacts of the imprisonment of youth, in the context of this study, preventing aboriginal youth from becoming incarcerated is crucial," said Dr. Kora DeBeck, the report's senior author and a research scientist and professor at Simon Fraser University.

The report was published in the journal *Public Health*.

"It appears from our study, addressing institutional discrimination may be a critical piece of the puzzle," DeBeck said in a statement.

But Vancouver Police were skeptical of the report's findings. Const. Brian Montague said the researchers did not consult police or ask for input.

"There was zero consultation with the VPD regarding our outreach and youth-at-risk programs," Montague said in an email to the CBC.

Police deny targeting aboriginal youth

"I will say that the VPD do not target aboriginal youth," the email added. "We target criminal behaviour to reduce violence and increase public safety, regardless of a person's ethnicity, cultural background or gender."

He added: "The incarceration of youth is a concern for the VPD. We will continue to work with at-risk youth in a variety of outreach programs."

The study looked at 1,050 youth, aged 14 to 26, over an eight-year period between September 2005 and May 2013. About one quarter, or 248 youths, were identified as Aboriginal.

Forty-four per cent of aboriginal participants reported being incarcerated for a period of time over the study's eight-year period compared to 34 per cent of non aboriginal participants, DeBeck said.

Researchers took into account drug use, homelessness and other factors that might place youth at greater risk of imprisonment, but still found that aboriginal street youth were 1.4 times more likely to end up incarcerated.

Researchers say the report is the first to show that street aboriginal youth in Vancouver are significantly more likely to be imprisoned than their non-aboriginal peers. Past studies have explored risk factors involving the adult aboriginal population, but less is known about youth.

Aboriginal peoples make up four per cent of Canada's population, but a quarter of all inmates in federal and provincial correctional facilities are aboriginal.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/prison-aboriginal-street-youth-1.3260819>

Aboriginal students' deaths can't all be explained by science, pathologist says

Inquest told that of the seven First Nations high-schoolers who died in Thunder Bay, the case of Paul Panacheese is still a mystery.



Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School students Paul Panacheese, left, and Curran Strang, right, died while in Thunder Bay attending school, hundreds of kilometres away from their remote northern reserves.

By: [Tanya Talaga](#) Global Economics Reporter, Published on Tue Oct 06 2015

Sometimes even the advances of modern science can't explain why a young, healthy male suddenly dies.

That is the case of Paul Panacheese, the 21-year old Mishkeegogamang First Nation student who was pronounced dead at a Thunder Bay hospital after he collapsed on his mother's floor on Nov. 11, 2006.

On Tuesday, [the inquest](#) looking into the reasons surrounding Panacheese's death and the deaths of six other aboriginal high-school students heard scientific testimony about the causes of death.

"Basically, Paul Panacheese's death is unexplained," pathologist Dr. Toby Rose, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, told the inquest on the second day of hearings.

Each student came from [remote First Nations communities](#) in northern Ontario and lived in Thunder Bay in order to attend high school. The youth all came from communities without adequate secondary schooling.

They died over an 11-year span from 2000 to 2011. Two died at home while five others, all boys, died in waterways around Thunder Bay.

Excessive drinking played a role in some of the deaths.

Panacheese lived with his mother Maryanne. She moved to Thunder Bay to be with her son during high school. Her son did not die of alcohol or drug use. There was no anatomical or pathological cause of death, no injuries or disease that would account for what killed Panacheese, Rose told the jury of four women and one man.

An unexplained death can occur by natural causes — such as sudden heart changes — that are undetectable, she said, adding that Panacheese's living relatives should be tested for heart conditions.

Female high school student Robyn Harper, 18, from Keewaywin First Nation, died just days after arriving in Thunder Bay to attend Dennis Cromarty High School.

Rose told the inquest that Harper died from acute ethanol toxicity — alcohol poisoning.

There are two types of drinkers, explained Rose: those who drink habitually and those who don't. Those who rarely drink tend to die at a lower level of blood alcohol. Harper had a lower alcohol tolerance level and didn't appear to be a habitual drinker.

Harper was found hours after she was dropped off by a First Nations-run bus service at the boarding house she had just moved into.

Rose said that "it may have made a difference" if she had been found earlier and put on a ventilator to help her breathe.

The rest of the boys — all of them at Dennis Cromarty, except for Jordan Wabasse, who attended the Matawa Learning Centre — were found in the waters in and around Thunder Bay.

Jethro Anderson, 15, had minor scrapes and scratches on his body but nothing that would contribute to his death, Rose said. His body, found Nov. 11, 2000, in the Kaministiquia River, showed signs of early decomposition and there was foam and froth in his airways — a sign of drowning.

Curran Strang, 18, had been near a local floodway on Sept. 22, 2005, and was said to have been drinking earlier with friends. His body was found four days later with "evidence of drowning," said Rose.

Reggie Bushie, 15, lived in a Thunder Bay boarding house with his older brother, who also attended school in the city.

In 2007, the boys were drinking on the rocks along the McIntyre River in late October, the inquest heard. His brother woke up in the water but couldn't find his brother. Reggie was reported missing.

His body was found on Nov. 1, 2007. It showed external evidence of immersion in water.

Jordan Wabasse, 15, went missing on Feb. 7, 2011. Nearly three months later, his body was found in the Kaministiquia River.

The autopsy report indicated Wabasse was in "advanced decomposition" when found and he had no significant internal or external injuries. The inquest heard he had drowned.

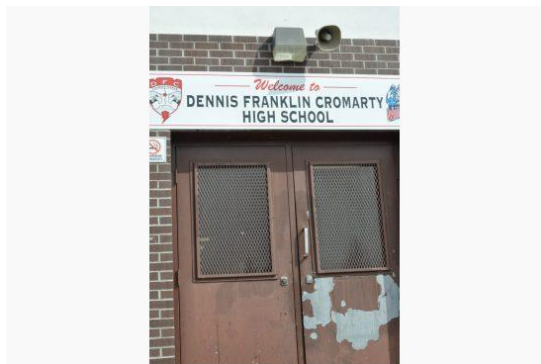
Low levels of oxycodone, a powerful painkiller, were detected in his body but they were so low that the drug couldn't contribute to a cause of death.

The inquest, which is being streamed live on the Community Safety and Correctional Services website, continues Wednesday.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/10/06/aboriginal-students-deaths-cant-all-be-explained-by-science-pathologist-says.html>

Thunder Bay high school is home away from home for First Nations students, inquest told

Each student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School is part of a community and their safety and care is entrusted to the school, said principal Jonathan Kakegamic.



About 100 kids from remote, northern Ontario reserves attend Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunder Bay.

By: [Tanya Talaga](#) Global Economics Reporter, Published on Wed Oct 07 2015

Jonathan Kakegamic, the principal of Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School, goes to sleep every night fearful that his phone will go off and he'll be told one of his students is missing.

It happened just last weekend, Kakegamic told a coroner's inquest looking into the deaths of seven First Nations students who left their remote northern communities to attend school in Thunder Bay.

Six of those students — Paul Panacheese, 21, Kyle Morrisseau, 17, Robyn Harper, 18, Curran Strang, 18, Reggie Bushie, 15, and Jethro Anderson, 15 — were students at Kakegamic's school. The seventh, Jordan Wabasse, 15, attended the Matawa Learning Centre. The students died between 2000 and 2011.

The majority of the 140 students attending Dennis Franklin come from First Nations reserves in the Sioux Lookout district of Ontario. They travel alone, hundreds of kilometres from their parents, to obtain a high school education because their communities don't have adequate secondary schools.

The inquest, presided over by Dr. David Eden, heard there are only five high schools (most go only to Grade 10) serving 23 First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario — an area about one-quarter the size of the province.

The students who want an education beyond Grade 10 have no choice but to leave home. Many of the students who attend Dennis Franklin Cromarty board with Thunder Bay families. The inquest also heard there is a lack of funding to support these students away from home.

Each student at the high school is part of a community and their safety and care is entrusted to the school, Kakegamic said. Many of the teens have never been to a large city before and they are not used to living on their own.

Last weekend, the high school's 24-hour team who checks to make sure every student is home at curfew, alerted Kakegamic at 2 a.m. that two students were missing.

When he saw the text, Kakegamic told the inquest that he and 10 members of the school community set out to do a search.

"The female showed up but not the male. It was his first time here," said Kakegamic, who was moved to tears recalling how stressful that night was. He called the teen's mom to ask her if she knew if her son knew anyone in Thunder Bay.

“We were out there until 4:30 a.m. You do what you can because the parents trust you,” he said, adding the situation ended well as the boy eventually turned up.

That is what life is like at Dennis Franklin Cromarty, said Kakegamic. Everyone on staff — from the teachers to the receptionist to the custodial staff — pitches in to help. The kids are also fed three meals a day at the school. There is a quiet room where students can visit a community elder, grab some bannock and some tea. There is also a program on the premises that helps teens deal with prescription drug addiction issues.

“We are well above what a school can offer. There is a difference when you look after your own. As a principle, my job isn’t 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. I’m on the clock until the kids (are) home. I can say that for all of my teachers . . . These students don’t go home to mom and dad,” he the inquest.

Dennis Franklin Cromarty is inspected yearly by the education ministry and just last school year, nearly 20 kids graduated. That number is growing every year.

“My door is always open,” he said.

The inquest is scheduled to continue until March, 2016 and hear from 200 witnesses.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/10/07/thunder-bay-high-school-is-home-away-from-home-for-first-nations-students-inquest-told.html>

Candidate questioned on involvement in 1996 mass arrests

[Derek Montague](#)

Published on October 07, 2015

The Green Party candidate for Long Range Mountains is blasting Liberal candidate Gudie Hutchings over her involvement with a Labrador fishing camp back in 1996, and the arrests of a large group of people who were protesting the camp’s construction.

In September of that year, the RCMP arrested about 50 Labrador Metis who were protesting the construction of a fishing lodge along the Eagle River, an area the Labrador Metis (now known as NunatuKavut) claim to be traditional aboriginal territory.

Hutchings was a part of the lodge’s ownership group, KGY, which received rights to the lodge after a call for proposals by the provincial government.

Terry Cormier, who raised the incident in both Monday’s and Tuesday’s candidates forums, said Hutchings’ involvement with the fishing camp, and the arrests, raises questions about how she would handle Indigenous issues in her riding, if elected.

“A lot of people brought this to my attention and it needs to be discussed,” said Cormier. “Indigenous identity ... and the future of the status and identity of the Indigenous in western Newfoundland, it’s going to be a really key issue in the next 10 years.”

According to a CBC article, the protestors grounded a helicopter and got in the way of transport vehicles. Three days after the arrests the charges against 47 protestors were stayed by the Crown.

At the time of the protest, Ernie Mclean, then-minister responsible for Labrador, said through a news release it was KGY that called for police assistance. McLean also defended KGY, saying the group offered Labrador Metis employment benefits at the fishing camp, and offered to give the Labrador Metis association half of the camp’s 300 salmon allocation.

Hutchings would not do an interview with The Western Star, but in a news release, denied calling the RCMP during the protest.

“During the course of construction some of the protestors took a decision to barricade a third-party’s civilian aircraft,” said Hutchings “It is my understanding that this drew the attention of the RCMP ... At no point in time did I or anyone representing me file a complaint with the RCMP, contrary to Mr. Cormier’s veiled accusation.

“These are at the level of the political attacks we see on American television and have come to expect from others. Until today, it had been something not done here in the Long Range Mountains. Hopefully we will return to the decency and mutual respect that has come to define western Newfoundland politics.”

Hutchings also defended the construction of the camp, saying many Metis were employed during that time. She also said many Labrador Aboriginals have gained employment at the camp over the last 20 years.

The Western Star requested interviews with NDP candidate Devon Babstock and Conservative candidate Wayne Ruth. Babstock said he didn’t know enough information on the 1996 protest to make comment, while Ruth couldn’t be reached before publication.

Direct Link: <http://www.thewesternstar.com/News/Election-2015/2015-10-07/article-4301620/Candidate-questioned-on-involvement-in-1996-mass-arrests/1>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Hamilton trustees call for more teaching of native history



Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board trustees will ask Education Minister Liz Sandals to create a curriculum that teaches students about the history of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

Hamilton Spectator

By [Richard Leitner](#)

Oct 01, 2015

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is urging the province to ensure students learn about the roots of Canada's troubled relationship with its First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

Trustees recently voted unanimously to write a letter asking Education Minister Liz Sandals to work with aboriginal communities to create a curriculum that teaches students about the history and impacts of treaties, residential schools and the Indian Act.

The letter piggybacks on a similar call from Halton's public school board, inspired by a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission report in June that concluded the central aim of past Canadian policies was "cultural genocide."

The commission report said too many people don't know about that history, leading to poor public policy decisions, racist attitudes and mistrust between aboriginal people and other Canadians.

"We've got some incredible teachers and staff that are already making a difference on First Nations and the history of First Nations and creating greater awareness," Flamborough trustee Penny Deathe said.

"I just feel that the ministry needs to make sure that it's in our regular history curriculum so that there's more information, more understanding of our First Nations."

Chair Todd White said the board already provides aboriginal perspectives in its curriculum, but "certainly there's room for improvement and enhancement" on the province's end.

He said 391 board students self-identified themselves as being aboriginal in a survey last year, although that number is likely higher because some students are reluctant to self-identify.

“We want to make it part of our curriculum so all students will have an understanding of aboriginal affairs and how that links into everyday life,” White said. “It would also provide supports for self-identified students, but also bridge that gap.”

The Hamilton and Halton public boards are also asking the province to create an online platform to connect with aboriginal communities across Canada to share best practices that support reconciliation.

“The hope would be to have a national hub where resources could be shared, information and knowledge could be available, and schools and aboriginal communities could communicate with one another,” White said.

Direct Link: <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5941343-hamilton-trustees-call-for-more-teaching-of-native-history/>

Connie Oakes case: Crown’s star witness told prisoners advocate Oakes wasn’t at crime scene

[National News](#) | October 2, 2015 by [Jorge Barrera](#)



Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

After she testified as the Crown’s star witness in Connie Oakes’ murder trial, Wendy Scott phoned a prisoners advocate to say the Cree woman was not at the scene of the crime, according to documents filed with the Court of Appeal of Alberta.

With no murder weapon, DNA or fingerprint evidence, the murder case against Oakes rested solely on Scott’s testimony.

Scott's testimony during the trial was riddled with contradictions and some of her claims did not match the physical evidence gathered as part of the murder investigation of Oakes, a Cree woman from Nekaneet Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. Scott, however, maintained throughout the trial that she was there with Oakes when Medicine Hat, Alta., resident Casey Armstrong was murdered in the bathroom of his trailer during the May 2011 Victoria Day long-weekend.

It has now emerged that after she testified at the trial, Scott contacted Kim Pate, who is head of the Elizabeth Fry Society, seeking help because she didn't believe Oakes was in Armstrong's trailer at the time of the murder, according documents filed by the Alberta Crown fighting Oakes appeal of the murder conviction.

"She called Kim Pate after she testified in Oakes' trial because she did not believe Oakes was at Armstrong's trailer," said the Crown document.

Oakes is currently serving a 14-year sentence after a Medicine Hat jury found her guilty of second degree murder. Armstrong was killed by a vicious knife wound to his neck that nearly decapitated him.

Oakes says she is innocent of the crime.

APTN National News has been investigating the case for over a year and interviewed Oakes in prison. [Click here for full coverage.](#)

Scott, who pleaded guilty to her involvement in the crime, is also before the Court of Appeal of Alberta trying to have her guilty plea quashed.

Scott has been assessed by a psychiatrist as having an IQ of 50.

The Crown filed the documents on Sept. 23 in response to Oakes' appeal filing. Oakes is fighting her murder conviction based fresh evidence contained in an affidavit from Scott that is currently sealed. The appeal hearing is set for November.

The Crown's filing, however, summarizes the main points in Scott's affidavit.

Scott's affidavit states she cooperated with the police and later the Crown to support their theory Oakes killed Armstrong because she was "very scared" and wanted "to be safe," according to the Crown's summary.

Scott's affidavit claims investigators suggested details about the case to her and at one point identified the photograph of the vehicle police believed was used in the murder, according to the Crown summary.

Scott also states she was questioned weekly by police about the Armstrong murder between June 2011 and January 2012, but those interrogations were never mentioned in the disclosure to Oakes' defence, according to the summary.

The Crown is arguing that the affidavit should not be used as fresh evidence in Oakes' appeal case because it doesn't meet the standard set out in case law. The Crown argues that Scott does not explain why she claimed during trial that she saw Oakes kill Armstrong.

"Oakes has characterized what Scott has done in this affidavit as a recantation, but it is not. It is the publication of vague assertions of belief without supporting information," said the Crown's submission. "While it would have been very simple for Scott to set out that she lied when she testified to seeing Oakes attacking Armstrong she has not done this."

The Crown also states the three officers named by Scott as being involved in previously undisclosed interrogations have each filed affidavits contradicting the claim she was interrogated throughout the summer and fall of 2011.

Medicine Hat officers Sgt. Mike Fisher, Sgt. Jeff Klick and Sgt. Jason Graham all claim in an affidavit they only came into contact with Scott between December 2011 and January 2012. The officers state in the sworn affidavits that they only learned of Scott's possible involvement in the murder in December 2011.

Medicine Hat police switched lead investigators on the Armstrong murder case after they failed to turn up any solid leads following seven months of investigation.

The officers' affidavits also reveal that Scott repeatedly changed her story during interrogations, even claiming at one point that everything she said about Oakes was a lie, that the real killer was named "Ginger" and that she was covering for her.

At another point, Scott claimed that the killer was a man who had shown up one day around the time Armstrong was killed with bloodstains and asked that she sell some pills he obtained.

Scott later told police she had lied about the man's involvement.

It emerged during Oakes' trial that the man's claim he was away working in Saskatchewan the weekend Armstrong was killed was corroborated by a cousin.

APTN has [also learned](#) that the red Grand-Am police believe was used in the murder was sold to a drug dealer named Ginger before the murder. Ginger, whose real name is known to *APTN*, has red hair.

An eye-witness who testified during trial said she saw two women, one with red hair and the other with long dark hair, in Armstrong's drive-way putting a black duffle bag or garbage bag in the back of an old, red car.

The affidavits also show investigators at one point concluded Scott had nothing to do with the murder. This occurred after they asked her to take the police to Armstrong's trailer, but she got lost before finally finding Armstrong's trailer.

"On Dec. 7, 2011, it was decided to release her as it did not appear as though she participated in the homicide in any way and also did not help destroy evidence or have prior knowledge of what was planned," stated Fischer, in his affidavit.

The police's interest in Scott resumed a little less than a month later after she went to the station to deal with a warrant on a separate matter, according to Fischer's affidavit. During the Jan. 5, 2012, police interview with Scott, she stated she had cancer and claimed a man was involved in the murder.

She then texted Fischer the next day saying she needed to speak with him and then over the phone stated she had to get "something off her chest."

Scott then went through another police interview the next day and accused the man along with Oakes of the murder, stated Fischer's affidavit.

It appears that a Jan. 10, 2012, interview with Scott formed the foundation of the case against Oakes. Scott was brought in after Staff-Sgt. Brent Secondiak, who was tasked with reanimating the murder investigation, ordered her arrest on a count of obstruction.

After her arrest, she went with the officers to Armstrong's trailer once more and then to the home she had shared with Oakes around the time of the murder. (Oakes claims Scott moved in with her after the murder occurred).

Then police continued to interrogate Scott who repeatedly changed her story, claiming she wasn't at the scene, that she was camping that weekend, that it was Ginger who was involved and that she was covering for her.

According to Graham's affidavit, the officers continued to interrogate Scott until finally she admitted she was involved and provided details on Oakes' involvement in the murder.

The next day she performed a re-enactment of the murder.

In her own appeal application, Scott alleges Medicine Hat police told her during the interrogations that Oakes issued a statement implicating her and that she faced 25 years in prison if she didn't confessed.

No such statement from Oakes existed.

Graham states in his affidavit that he did mention an Oakes statement during the Jan. 10 interrogation, but in a round-about way.

“I also said that if I had spoken to Oakes, why would she say that Scott went into the house with her?” stated Graham, in the affidavit. “Scott vehemently denied that she had ever been in Armstrong’s house. I also said that if Oakes was trying to paint a picture of Scott that was wrong she needed to say so and Scott said that Oakes was doing that.”

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/02/connie-oakes-case-crowns-star-witnessed-told-prisoners-advocate-oakes-I-at-crime-scene/>

Aboriginal elder-in-residence focuses on the future

‘Horrible’ experience in public school shapes his urge to help today’s students

By Tracy Sherlock, Vancouver Sun October 2, 2015



Shane Pointe, pictured outside the school board offices in Vancouver, says he wants to do his best to help children.

VANCOUVER -- In his new role as Aboriginal elder-in-residence and knowledge-keeper at the Vancouver school board, Shane Pointe hopes to help all children be successful in school.

When Pointe, 60, started school on Vancouver Island as a young boy, academically it wasn’t a success. While socially and conversationally he did well, he didn’t learn to read. As a result, his academic performance suffered, although he did get one A — in drafting class at high school.

When he was 22, a friend told him he should start reading. So he learned to read, and since then, has gone to college and written stories, poems and analysis.

But as one of the first First Nations students to attend the public school system in B.C., the experience was “horrible,” he said.

Today, he puts all of that in the past, instead focusing on the future.

“To help children learn at any level is always a great joy to me. I’m happy to be here at the Vancouver school board to do my best job for children — not the staff or for trustees — but for students, in particular First Nations,” Pointe said.

Building a better relationship between Aboriginal people and the education system is something the entire province is leaning toward with the new curriculum and its emphasis on Aboriginal learning.

Not only will students in B.C. be learning about the history of residential schools, but they will also have Aboriginal perspectives embedded into all parts of the curriculum in what the government hopes will be a meaningful and authentic manner.

During Pointe’s one-year, full-time contract, he hopes to bring his personal motto — Nutsamaht, which means “We are one” — to life.

“My family’s view and my own as well is exactly the same as that of the Dalai Lama, who was here last year to engage Vancouver students,” Pointe said. “He said you should educate the mind and the heart. That’s what Nutsamaht means: We have to educate the heart and the mind and then we become one.”

He specifically writes the First Nations word phonetically, so that children and other people can read it and say it.

As well as working in several school districts for 25 years in roles ranging from adviser to curriculum developer to child advocate, Pointe has worked as an elder in corrections and at Children’s and Women’s hospitals and as a drug and alcohol counsellor in the Musqueam band.

He is the father of three daughters, 12 grandchildren and one great grandchild, with one more on the way. He speaks the Coast Salish language including four dialects and says he’s been learning about Aboriginal culture ever since he was “old enough to think.”

He recently took part in a blessing ceremony for a canoe made by a local artist for the school district. Nancy Brennan, associate superintendent, said Pointe took the time to explain the ceremony to the students.

“It was very, very wonderful to see the attention that the kids paid to what he was doing,” Brennan said.

She said Pointe’s story of not learning to read in school is a “classic example of why the Ministry of Education has recognized that we need to do things differently. That’s why we need to incorporate Aboriginal culture and teachings and so on because the way that it happened for Shane wasn’t successful. We can all learn from that.”

Direct Link:

http://www.vancouversun.com/literacy/raiseareader/aboriginal+elder+residence+focuses+future/11410095/story.html?_lsa=d8b6-9fcb

First Nations Family Advocate holding march for kids in care

By [Brittany Greenslade](#) Reporter/Anchor Global News, October 3, 2015 1:02 pm



Dozens of Winnipeggers gathered Saturday to call for change to Manitoba's Child and Family Services system.

WINNIPEG — Dozens of Winnipeggers marched through the city Saturday morning pushing for the province to make improvements to its child welfare system.

It was put on by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and started at the Children's Hospital and ended with a ceremony at The Forks with the AMC's Grand Chief Derek Nepinak.

The group planned to walk by the Women's Hospital and the remand centre.

There are more than 10,000 children in the care of Child and Family Services (CFS) in Manitoba.



Dozens of Winnipeggers gathered Saturday to call for change to Manitoba's Child and Family Services system.

Manitoba is seizing a record number of newborns — as many as 40 a month from one downtown hospital — rather than supporting parents claims Cara Morgan. Morgan is AMC's First Nations Children's Advocate. The infants are being taken into care without any assessment of the parents or their ability to care for the child, she said.

“We’re taking children and putting them in unsafe situations and they aren’t having the benefit of a healthy childhood,” said Morgan. “They are hurting, they are aching to go home and a lot of time these missing persons are because children are trying to get back to their parents.”

Manitoba's CFS system has faced backlash in recent months. Most notably after the death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine whose body was pulled from the Red River in August 2014.

Her killer has still not been found.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2256759/first-nations-family-advocate-holding-march-for-kids-in-care/>

First Nations Group's New Library Meant to Boost Literacy



posted October 2, 2015 by [Lauren Hjalmarson](#)

The Write to Read Project is furthering its goal of increasing literacy among B.C.'s First Nations by opening a library in Merritt.

The library was built for the Nooaitch Indian Band, and the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia will be present at its opening on October 3rd at 12 p.m.

Nine other libraries have been built across British Columbia through the [Write to Read Project](#), which is a partnership between Rotary and the Government House Foundation.

Youth from the Merritt Rotary Interact Club have volunteered for the project, completing tasks such as sorting donated books. This has strengthened the connection between the urban group represented by Merritt and the Nooaitch Indian Band, fulfilling a second goal of the Write to Read Project.

This video was posted to YouTube by a member of the Merritt Rotary Interact Club, and it shows the community-minded process of the library's preparation.

The Nooaitch Indian Band library is located at 2970 Shackelly Road in Merritt.

Direct Link:

https://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/Provincial/15/10/02/First_Nations_Group_s_New_Library_Meant_to_Boost_Literacy/

NDP promises \$4.8 billion over eight years for aboriginal education

By Staff The Canadian Press



ENOCH, Alta. – An emotional Tom Mulcair promised to form a nation-to-nation relationship with aboriginal peoples as he unveiled Wednesday the indigenous plank of his platform.

In one of the centrepieces of the NDP's plan, Mulcair committed to removing the two per cent cap on annual federal funding increases for reserve programs and services.

He also committed \$4.8 billion over eight years for aboriginal education – the first \$1.8 billion to flow over the next four years with the rest to follow in a second mandate.

If the NDP wins government on Oct. 19, Mulcair said his success as a prime minister would be measured by progress for First Nations.

"I've said to you there's no issue on which I've held more meetings," Mulcair said at a forum hosted Wednesday by the Assembly of First Nations in Enoch, Alta.

"I would dare say to you that in fact, I've held more meetings on First Nations, Inuit and Metis questions across the country than all other issues combined."

Mulcair said aboriginal issues have been a "top priority" for him because he believes the future of the country depends on improving conditions in indigenous communities.

"We can't keep going at it this way," he said. "It's fruitless, it brings us down a path to failure if we continue with what the Conservatives and Liberals have done for 148 years."

Mulcair's comments were met with a bit of skepticism.

"Why should we believe you?" former Treaty 8 First Nation leader Rose Laboucan asked Mulcair during a question and answer session.

Laboucan, who refuses to vote Conservative, is still an undecided voter.

"I want someone who is going to make a difference and a change for real," she said.

Mulcair stressed the sincerity of his commitments.

“What I am saying to you is this: the numbers that I have given you here today are the beginning of a new era,” he said. “You spoke to me from your heart; when I’m speaking to you, it is from the heart.”

Mulcair reinforced the sentiment later as he visited White Fish Bay near Kenora, Ont. – a remote community within Treaty 3 First Nation.

The issue of aboriginal education funding has been a source of friction between the New Democrats and Liberals.

The NDP has questioned how Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau can follow through on his pledge to bolster First Nations education by \$1.8 billion, suggesting there is a \$1.7 billion shortfall in the Liberal fiscal framework.

Trudeau has defended his party’s math and says he intends to top up unspent government money with hundreds of millions more every year to ensure aboriginal education is properly funded.

In their budget released this spring, Conservatives earmarked \$200 million over five years beginning in 2015-16 for First Nations education.

Mulcair and Trudeau are in agreement on one issue: the need for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

On the campaign trail Tuesday, Stephen Harper reiterated such a study is not going to happen under a Conservative government.



It is “way past the time” for studying the subject because there have been some 40 examinations already, he said, adding that a re-elected Conservative government would pursue efforts to prevent violence against aboriginal women and ensure appropriate penalties are in place for abusers.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2263216/ndp-set-to-release-partys-indigenous-policy-in-enoch-alta/>

Children in B.C. gov't care need more social workers now: advocate



Dirk Meissner, The Canadian Press

Published Thursday, October 8, 2015 12:04PM EDT

Last Updated Thursday, October 8, 2015 9:26PM EDT

VICTORIA -- Battered by a series of teen deaths and damning reports that say British Columbia's government is failing at protecting vulnerable children, the minister in charge said Thursday confronting tragedy is part of her job description.

Stephanie Cadieux acknowledged there have been government failures connected to working with children and families hurt by violence, neglect and poverty, but those missteps and their real-life consequences are not a result of her ministry's indifference.

"The ministry will always have really unfortunate things that happen," she said. "Really sad, really tragic. Sometimes we learn from those situations that perhaps could have been prevented. Sometimes they couldn't."



Friends say Alex Gervais, 18, killed himself at a Super 8 hotel where he'd been placed by the B.C. government after his group home was closed.

B.C.'s independent children's watchdog Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond said in a report Thursday that children and youth in government care are not being properly protected because of ministry underfunding.

Her report, *The Thin Front Line*, concluded the ministry needs to increase its budget by \$20 million in order to hire 250 more people, including 200 front-line social workers, just to make its social service duties functional.

"We need to add 250 positions immediately," she said at a news conference.

Turpel-Lafond said the government's position that it hired 110 new social workers in the past year doesn't add up because 91 social workers left government, leaving only 19 new people.

Cadieux maintained her ministry will meet its target of hiring 200 new social workers by January.

"I appreciate the representative would like to see a budget increase for this ministry of any size," said Cadieux. "The challenge is always to balance the demands of all the ministries and all of the real needs of the province with the dollars that are available. We would love to do more if we could."

Turpel-Lafond's report was released on the same day the B.C. Government and Services Employees Union issued its own review criticizing government support of social workers in aboriginal child service agencies.

The union's report, *Closing the Circle*, said the aboriginal child welfare system is culturally unsuitable, underfunded and understaffed.

Aboriginal leaders also demanded Thursday an independent investigation into the death of an aboriginal teenager in government care.

The First Nations Leadership Council sent a letter to Premier Christy Clark urging an immediate independent inquiry into the death of 18-year-old Alex Gervais.

Gervais fell to his death from a fourth-floor window of an Abbotsford hotel on Sept. 18. Turpel-Lafond has said it's believed he killed himself.

The a case review of Gervais's care has been launched, but the ministry has resisted calls for a public inquiry.

Opposition NDP Leader John Horgan has called for Cadieux to resign, describing her job as minister as "pathetic."

Horgan said the government appears unwilling to examine its failures, highlighting its refusal to review the circumstances of the death of 19-year-old Carly Fraser, who jumped to her death from the Lions Gate Bridge in December 2014.

Carly Fraser's mother, Lisa, said she received a letter from B.C.'s director of child welfare saying there would not be a review of the death because the teen was considered an adult. She died 20 hours after her 19th birthday.

Cadieux said in the legislature a review was underway to determine if proper policy was followed for the rejection, but she didn't say if a case review would be held into the teen's death.

Turpel-Lafond said \$20 million was a "small pittance" to pay to help children and families.

"If you invest it you can make a change," she said. "You have to get the kids supported."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/children-in-b-c-gov-t-care-need-more-social-workers-now-advocate-1.2601165>

Manitoba First Nations child advocate says province is muzzling her

Manitoba Tories say NDP government 'casts aspersions' on Cora Morgan's work

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 5:00 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 3:06 PM CT



Manitoba's First Nations advocate for children in care is accusing the NDP government and child-welfare officials of trying to muzzle her and prevent her from helping families in need.



Cora Morgan, left, is joined at Thursday's news conference by Tory Family Services critic Ian Wishart and Morgan's assistant, Kyra Wilson. (Jeff Stapleton/CBC)

Cora Morgan was joined by Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives on Thursday to discuss how Child and Family Services (CFS) officials have responded to her criticisms of the system.

"It always ends up that this information that we're bringing forward is just discounted, and so in that sense, it's muzzling the message. They discount the severity of these issues," she told reporters in Winnipeg.

"Why are you afraid of us if you are working transparently?"

Tory family services critic Ian Wishart said the province has not been listening to Morgan, who was appointed by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs earlier this year to respond to mounting concerns about the number of aboriginal children in the care of CFS.

"I would really doubt that [the government has] taken [Morgan's criticisms] seriously. They seem to be going out of their way to cast aspersions on what she's had to say," Wishart said.

"She's certainly been doing a good job in regards to standing up on behalf of the First Nation families and we think that it's important that that be noted."

'I was kicked out of a meeting,' says Morgan

Earlier this week, Morgan publicly voiced her support for a Winnipeg mother who was fighting to regain custody of her children, while CFS sought to make the children permanent wards of the province.

On Thursday, Morgan said a CFS agency prevented her from taking part in a meeting.



Cora Morgan, Manitoba's First Nations advocate for children in care, speaks to reporters in Winnipeg on Thursday morning. (Jeff Stapleton/CBC)

"So I was kicked out of a meeting, and the whole agency had instructions that they were not to involve the First Nations family advocate office or communicate with us in any way," she said.

Morgan added that she's worried that other CFS agencies may also try to bar her from meetings with families.

Minister responds

Family Services Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross later told reporters that Morgan, as an advocate appointed by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, is contacted by families to help them.

"Families ask that she attends meetings. It will be up to the professionals on the front lines on how they decide what happens at that meeting. I think what we need to talk about is that she is doing that important work for families," Irvin-Ross said.

The minister added that it's up to First Nations CFS officials — and, by extension, First Nations leaders — to decide whether Morgan can accompany families to CFS meetings.

"We have to understand and respect that our system is devolved.... First Nations leadership are part of our development of our system and the implementation. The agencies are run by First Nations executive directors, hired by First Nations board of directors," Irvin-Ross said.

"They have this balancing act that they have to do around the protection of the child and supporting the families, and it is a tough balancing act. But again, I welcome her involvement."

Agency concerns

Animikii Ozoson is the agency that sought legal advice on whether Morgan should be permitted to attend agency meetings with families. Bobbi Pompana, CEO of the Southern First Nations Network of Care that oversees the agency and nine others said the agency wanted to make sure it was on solid legal ground.

"We don't want to break the law by giving information that we're legally not able to," she said.

Pompana says SFNCC has been working cooperatively with Morgan to find out how she can play a role for families without breaking any rules.

"Her position is not legislated and not on the list of a person that we can share information with," she said.

Pompana says Morgan would be able to sit in on meetings if she got a court order for each particular case she handled.

High case load

First Nations children's advocate Cora Morgan said the workload she's faced with is very high.

She said she had 35 cases to deal with on Tuesday alone, and there are only two people — herself and her assistant — working in the First Nations advocate office.

"We can't manage all the families that are coming in," she said.

The province needs to give a stronger response to the issue of so many aboriginal children in care, rather than simply saying that apprehending children is done as a last resort, she said.

Wishart said the Tories are looking for "some transparency, for some of the truth to come out, because there's certainly been a lot of innuendo tossed back and forth between the department and Cora."

Wishart acknowledged there may be a risk for Morgan to align herself with a political party instead of remaining neutral.

Morgan said while she is trying to keep politics out of her job, she'll team up with anyone to get the message out.

"We are in a situation where things have gotten out of control," she said.

"Change needs to happen, and it's urgent change that is needed, and our office is looking for allies and supporters in any way that we can."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-first-nations-child-advocate-says-province-is-muzzling-her-1.3261542>

First Nations student deaths inquest: family member speaks out

'They look to us aboriginal people as just like drunks,' Kyle Morrisseau's brother says

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 7:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 1:19 PM ET



Josh Kakegamic says his brother, Kyle Morrisseau, came to Thunder Bay from Keewaywin First Nation "for an education and a brighter future." Kyle died in 2009 while he was attending Dennis Franklin Cromarty high school in the city. (Martine Laberge/CBC)

The brother of one of the First Nations students whose deaths are the subject of an inquest in Thunder Bay, Ont., says he's disappointed with the focus of the proceedings so far.

Josh Kakegamic's brother Kyle Morrisseau is one of seven students whose deaths are the subject of the inquest that started Oct. 5. The family is from Keewaywin First Nation, about 600 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay.

The inquest is looking into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the young people, aged 15 through 21, who travelled from their remote First Nations to attend high school in Thunder Bay. All seven died between 2000 and 2011.



Kyle Morrisseau was 17 when he died in 2009. (CBC)

"I'm hoping for more details actually," Josh Kakegamic said halfway through the first week of what is expected to be six months of proceedings. "I just feel there could have been more time and dedication taken to the matter."

The first day of testimony was taken up with autopsy results and the toxicology reports on the students who died. Morrisseau was among five students whose deaths the experts attributed, at least in part, to intoxication.

Kakegamic said that focus ignores the fact that his brother came to the city for an education and a brighter future, but ended up dead.

"I kind of look at it as they look to us aboriginal people as just like drunks, just to get a drink, but they don't know our backgrounds," he said.

Morrisseau was "an easy going guy" talented at hunting, trapping and painting," his brother said.

"He's always with me in my heart all the time," Kakegamic said. "Like I always think about him everyday when I wake up, especially coming out here for this inquest."

There's another brother Kakegamic is also thinking about.

"My younger brother is in Grade 8 right now, knowing that next year he wants to come out here...to attend high school," Kakegamic said. "I don't feel too comfortable being okay with that but I think his education is more important because I want him to have a future and to experience being out here in the city as well."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-student-deaths-inquest-family-member-speaks-out-1.3261557>

Reforms needed to help vulnerable aboriginal children, families: BCGEU report

by [The Canadian Press](#)

Posted Oct 8, 2015 9:10 am PDT

Last Updated Oct 8, 2015 at 9:11 am PDT



VANCOUVER – The BC union representing more than 400 employees working with aboriginal children, youth and families says the province's aboriginal child welfare system desperately needs reform.

The [BC Government and Service Employees Union](#) (BCGEU) makes the call in its report examining provincial supports to First Nations children and families.

According to [the report](#), entitled Closing the Circle, the aboriginal child welfare system is culturally unsuitable, under-funded and under-staffed.

The BCGEU wants a new service delivery model, saying the current model fails its clients while being mired in an overly complex patchwork of agencies and funding arrangements.

Union of BC Indian Chiefs Grand Chief Stewart Phillip endorses the study, adding it's time for the province to act.

Minister of Children and Family Development Stephanie Cadieux released a statement saying no one in the ministry has yet spoken with the BCGEU about its new report, but the ministry will take the time it needs to review the recommendations.

Direct Link: <http://www.news1130.com/2015/10/08/reforms-vulnerable-aboriginal-children-families-bcgeu-1/>

Aboriginal Health

Students revive extinct squash with 800-year-old seeds

Seeds found during an archaeological dig on First Nations land revive a long-lost varietal.

By: [Robin Shreeves](#)

October 1, 2015, 5:57 p.m.



The seed that grew this squash were preserved for 800 years in a clay pot in Wisconsin.

[Gardens](#) may be popping up in schools everywhere, but one school garden in Winnipeg, Canada is making news after growing a squash thought to be extinct for hundreds of years.

It all started with an archaeological dig on First Nations land that unearthed a small clay vessel estimated to be about 800 years old. Inside the vessel, the archaeologists found [preserved seeds](#) of an ancient squash.

Students at Canadian Mennonite University successfully grew one large squash from the seeds, but they aren't stopping there. The plan is to save the seeds from that first revived squash and then grow even more squash from those. The goal is to never let this squash go extinct again, according to [APTN National News](#).

Brian Etkin, Coordinator of the Garden of Learning in Winnipeg, sees this revived squash as much more than a vegetable.

“This squash is representative of a tribe of a large community and everybody in that community having a place and food being a right on citizenship,” said Etkin.



Brian Etkin holds the ancient squash (Photo: APTN)

When the seeds were first put into that clay vessel all those years ago, they were likely meant to be used much sooner than now, but the discovery of them is a reminder that saving seeds is the best way to ensure plant varieties survive. The fruits and vegetables seen in the grocery store and even at the farmers markets are just a fraction of the varieties that exist.

Over the past 100 years or so, we've decreased the variety of produce grown and instead focused our efforts in cultivating species that produce a high yield or are able to travel long distances. But, we're discovering we're close to losing so many varieties, and seed savers are working to bring back varieties that most people have forgotten.

Thanks to the ancient indigenous person who put those seeds in a clay vessel hundreds of years ago, this squash varietal won't be lost to history. And thanks to more modern seed savers, we're reviving and preserving other fruits and vegetables — like this exquisite-looking [Glass Gem corn](#):



Direct Link: <http://www.mnn.com/your-home/organic-farming-gardening/blogs/students-revive-extinct-squash-800-year-old-seeds>

Nearly Half Of Seized Manitoba Newborns Have Developmental, Addiction Issues

CP | By Chinta Puxley, The Canadian Press

Posted: 10/04/2015 10:38 am EDT Updated: 10/04/2015 11:59 am EDT



WINNIPEG — Manitoba's family services minister says almost half the hundreds of newborns seized by the province have developmental or addiction issues.

Last year, 358 Manitoba babies were taken into care at birth. Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross said 45 per cent of them had a medical problem.

"In some cases, it's because of drugs that a mother may have used prior to the birth, so there is medical detoxing that has to happen for the child," she said in an interview. "(Apprehension) does not happen haphazardly. It is looked at as a last resort."

Child and Family Services agencies seize an average of one newborn a day. The province has one of the highest apprehension rates in Canada. There are over 10,000 children in care, the vast majority of them aboriginal.

Manitoba child welfare has been criticized for years for being too quick to apprehend children in some cases and for returning others repeatedly to abusive parents.

The system came under harsh scrutiny a year ago when 15-year-old Tina Fontaine was killed after running away from a hotel where she was in government care. The teen's body was found wrapped in a bag in the Red River.

The province promised to stop using hotels to house young wards after a girl was seriously assaulted this summer. The victim and the youth charged were in government care at a downtown Winnipeg hotel.

Manitoba's First Nations children's advocate recently criticized the apprehension of newborns which she said were being "shoved anywhere." Cora Morgan said newborns are being placed in loveless shelters rather than with their parents.

Irvin-Ross said the preference is always to place an apprehended child with family. Last year, only 10 infants were housed in shelters and only temporarily, she said.

The province is shifting its focus to prevention programs, the minister said, but sometimes apprehensions are unavoidable for the safety of the child.

Morgan said Manitoba apprehends double the number of newborns as Alberta — a province with quadruple the population — and three times the number as Saskatchewan, which has roughly the same population.

In cases she has worked on, newborns were taken from the hospital to an emergency shelter where they had limited contact with their mother, she said.

Morgan suggested that if almost half the newborns Manitoba seizes have a medical issue, then there should be programs and shelters that work with mothers as opposed to shutting them out.

"If you know that's what the stats are, why are there not supports extended prenatally?"

Manitoba has caught the attention of Christi Belcourt, a celebrated Metis artist in Ontario. After some research, she took to social media using the hashtag #StopStealingOurKids to denounce the apprehensions.

Given 90 per cent of children in Manitoba's care are aboriginal, Canadians have to connect the dots between residential schools and the '60s Scoop, when aboriginal children were removed from their homes and placed with non-aboriginal families, Belcourt said.

"You have to start to ask the question is this deliberate? Is there anything here that could be classified as genocide?" she said. "Is this part of a continued attempt at assimilation? We really have to take a good look at it."

Jon Gerrard, Manitoba's lone Liberal member of the legislature and a pediatrician, said even if a mother or her baby is struggling with a medical problem, separating the two at birth is risky. The baby is deprived of the mother's breast milk and both lose crucial time to bond.

"We've got a minister who says she wants to do prevention," Gerrard said. "The best place to start doing prevention is when you identify a mother who is a potential risk."

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/10/04/almost-half-of-newborns-seized-in-manitoba-have-developmental-addiction-issues_n_8240342.html

Neskantaga First Nation demands action on 20-year boil-water advisory

Federal candidates must address First Nations health as election issue, chief says

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 05, 2015 4:23 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 06, 2015 9:22 AM ET



The Neskantaga First Nation in northern Ontario is demanding that all federal parties make First Nations health an election issue.

The fly-in community in the James Bay lowlands has the longest-standing boil-water advisory in the country — more than 20 years. More than 300 people have been forced to live under a boil water advisory since 1995.

Chief Wayne Moonias took to a podium on Monday in Toronto at the Waakebenis Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health to highlight what he described as unacceptable living conditions.

"We are calling on the government to be aware of this. We need action. We need resolution as to how [and] why this is continuing today in our community," Moonias said.

The chief wants the next prime minister to personally deal with the issue.

"Our people in this community, Neskantaga — yes, we are only 350 people but we are still human beings," Moonias said.

'Lack of political will'

According to federal and provincial figures there are more than 160 water advisories in nearly 120 First Nations across the Canada.

"The clean water crisis is caused by a lack of political will in Ottawa," Moonias said.

Isadore Day, chair of the Assembly of First Nations health committee, says the federal election has been focused on issues such as the niqab instead of life-threatening problems on reserves.

"We're seeing a debate nationally about whether a person should wear a piece of clothing, yet our First Nations communities are dying because of the poor water conditions in their communities," Day said.

Day said the New Democratic and Liberal party leaders have indicated they want to work with aboriginal leaders to solve the water crisis, but he has not received a response from the Conservatives.

Still no solution for Neskantaga

A water treatment plant was built in Neskantaga in 1993, Moonias said, but there were problems almost immediately.



The chief of Neskantaga First Nation says the majority of children on his reserve have sores such as these on their bodies. (submitted)

"Back in 1993 when it was built ... after a year or so it was deemed unable to produce proper drinking water. Now it's 2015 and we are still dealing with that issue."

Leaders say the majority of children living in Neskantaga have sores that continue to multiply, but with limited access to doctors and nurses it's impossible to get proper diagnosis.

Earlier this year CBC News learned the federal government has spent more than \$1 million on bottled water for the community. Around the same time Moonias learned Neskantaga is No. 19 on the government's priority list for water plant upgrades, dropping from fourth on that list in previous years.

Moonias says it would cost \$8 million to design and build a new water-treatment plant in the community.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/neskantaga-first-nation-demands-action-on-20-year-boil-water-advisory-1.3256929>

Consultant 'developing plan' for Aboriginal wellness centre

[Ollie Williams](#) — [October 5, 2015](#)



The Department of Health has hired a consultant to help the development of a new Aboriginal wellness centre in Yellowknife.

Within days of announcing plans to build a new hospital in the city, at an initial cost of some \$350 million, the health minister tabled a document which suggests the territory is progressing toward a separate, standalone wellness centre.

The [undated document](#), tabled last week, says the department is “working with Stanton Territorial Health Authority to define the needs for the development of a Territorial Aboriginal Wellness Centre”.

It continues: “The department has recently engaged an external consultant to develop an operational plan to support the development of a Territorial Aboriginal Wellness Centre.

“Some aspects of Aboriginal wellness cannot be accommodated within the walls of an acute care hospital due to building code and safety requirements. We are committed to exploring the need for a standalone wellness centre, outside the walls of the acute care hospital, that could accommodate traditional activities and act as a gathering place for patients, family and friends.”

A wellness centre is distinct from a treatment facility.

Last week, [responding to Deh Cho MLA Michael Nadli](#), health minister Glen Abernethy said a wellness centre may also be a future use for the former Nats'ejee K'eh treatment facility on the Hay River Reserve.

Abernethy said options for that building “do not include a treatment facility but a wellness centre, a training centre for mental health and addictions, a spiritual centre for Aboriginal people, as well as possibly the home location of what will be the future of a mobile treatment option”.

In February, the Elders' Council at Stanton Hospital called for the development of an Aboriginal wellness centre in the city – as did Nahendeh MLA Kevin Menicoche a month later.

“Aboriginal people die earlier, live in conditions comparable to third-world countries, experience housing and living crises, obtain lower education levels, experience unemployment and poverty and are at increased risk for suicide, tuberculosis and diabetes,” Menicoche [told the legislature](#) in March.

“Improving and recognizing a unique Aboriginal healthcare model is beneficial because it has been shown in other jurisdictions that having close Aboriginal ties to traditional healing works wonders. Cancer rates decrease, diabetes rates decline and the general health and well-being improves because our people are comfortable and relaxed in a setting they recognize.”

Stanton security

In a [separate document](#) tabled last week, the Department of Health also confirmed it is keeping its current Stanton Hospital security contractor.

Concerns over hospital security followed a [number of incidents](#) in late 2014 and early 2015. There had been some calls to bring security in-house under GNWT control, or seek a new contractor.

“At this time, the department is not considering changing the current contract with the security provider as they are meeting the security needs at Stanton,” read the response to regular MLAs.

“Furthermore, given challenges associated with retention, the department will not be looking at hiring security personnel as employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories.”

The territory says new measures in place at Stanton include an increased security presence featuring guards with more experience and training.

Direct Link: <http://www.myyellowknifenow.com/8674/consultant-developing-plan-for-aboriginal-wellness-centre/>

Kehewin Cree First Nation protests growing meth abuse

Tuesday, Oct 06, 2015 11:15 am

By: [AMEYA CHARNALIA](#)



Over 100 residents from Kehewin Cree Nation participated in a walk through Kehewin out to Highway 41 to raise awareness for meth abuse.

Over 100 Kehewin Cree First Nation members took part in a walk to raise awareness about growing methamphetamine abuse in the community.

Terri Suntjens, who works at Kehewin Health Services, noticed a worrying trend when a number of her clients admitted to using meth recently. Kehewin Tribal Counselling Services, which provides one-on-one counselling and procures referrals to rehab and detox, also started receiving public complaints about a growing meth problem.

“There was a big outcry,” said Desire Ambie Jackson, a receptionist at KTCS. A meeting attended by tribal chiefs, community agencies and the Bonnyville RCMP was held in September to outline a plan to do something about the worrying news. A Drug Awareness Walk was planned for Oct. 2 and another community meeting with elders will be held on Oct. 7.

Jackson said the community is also preparing to conduct workshops in schools to highlight the meth issue and possibly conduct surveys to get an idea of addiction rates.

“Meth hurts,” she said. “It draws you away from family, from love.”

She added, “It affects the person individually and everyone in some way or the other is affected by it.”

People gathered at Kehewin Health Services Friday morning with signs and banners calling to kick the drug out of the community. The group swelled in size as Kehewin's 1,000-plus community came out from houses and cars on the main road to join the crowd headed to Highway 41.

"We're here to support the process of coming off the meth," said Suntjens "We're trying to spread the message that we don't want it here."

She added that layoffs in the oil and gas sector are also contributing to higher drug use across the Lakeland.

Benny Badger was recently elected to Kehewin Council. He emphasized the need to focus on healing and reconciliation.

"It's everybody's problem," he explained. "We got to find a way to work together, to find a solution."

Badger believes that people are speaking out through their addiction because they feel like they do not have anywhere else to go and very few people to turn to.

"We're showing that we still care," Badger said. "It's not to push them away or to shame them, it's about bringing them back and finding their gifts again."

Badger also reached out to the RCMP to send a positive message that the community and the police can work together.

"Drug abuse is a growing concern on the Kehewin Cree Nation, specifically the abuse of meth," said Sgt. Sarah Parke of the Bonnyville RCMP, who attended the walk. "The Bonnyville RCMP is committed to continuing their partnership with the Kehewin Cree Nation in an effort to continue to raise awareness and fight the war on drugs in their community."

As the community begins the uphill task of combating drug abuse, the urgency remains clear. Many remain worried about the potentially ravaging effects of meth use. From contracting a life-threatening disease such as hepatitis or HIV through sharing needles to poverty to death even, the consequences are dire, noted Jackson.

Suntjens believes the drug awareness campaign will make a difference, but shares the concern.

"It's claiming a lot of our people."

Direct Link: <http://www.bonnyvillenouvelle.ca/Kehewin-Cree-First-Nation-protests-growing-meth-abuse-20151006>

First Nations health crisis is a Canadian problem

'Once again the federal campaigns are ignoring Canada's most urgent issue: the health of our indigenous communities, families and individuals.'



Health crisis: People from the Grassy Narrows First Nation in northern Ontario protest the long-term health effects of mercury contamination in their waterways.

By: Jean-Victor Wittenberg Michael Dan Cindy Blackstock Isadore Day Published on Thu Oct 08 2015

Here we are – once again in the middle of a national election and once again the federal campaigns are ignoring what is Canada's most urgent issue: the health of our indigenous communities, families and individuals.

This is without doubt the most shameful fact of Canada's history. It continues to inflict its damage on more than a million people in Canada. No other group in Canada lives with the poverty, illness, social and cultural burdens that we impose on our indigenous peoples: third-world standards of housing, water supply, social supports and healthcare; more illness of all sorts (diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis, to name but a few), higher suicide rates, more children in foster care, lower levels of education and employment ... when will it be addressed and when will it end?

Indigenous leaders are attempting to bring the problems confronting their nation to the public debate. Why are political parties not actively debating ways to solve these shameful problems?

Our political leaders repeatedly speak of Canadian values. Our values surely include going beyond mouthing platitudes and expressing concern. They surely go beyond just making apologies. They go beyond just recognizing that immigration has dealt a terrible blow to indigenous peoples, a blow that falls inexorably from generation to generation.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper recognized the damage inflicted on aboriginal people and their children and apologized. What has the government done since then?

These problems are complex and have deeply intertwined roots that go far back into our shared time here in North America. Destruction of First Nations' cultures has destroyed the resources and supports that parents need to guide their children to physical and mental health, to guide them to healthy and adaptive ways of coping with frustration, loss and pain, to help them enjoy the fruits of life and of their own accomplishments, to take pride in their own histories and narratives. First Nations communities have identified a need to improve parenting.

The bitter harvest of residential schools, family disruption, economic disaster, unrelenting stress for day after day, has left parents unable to help their children regulate stress. Unregulated stress is known as toxic or traumatic stress. This begins in earliest infancy through the process called attachment. Unregulated stress and insecure attachment are associated with depression, anxiety, difficulties with learning, difficulties with social relationships, difficulties with drugs and alcohol; the list goes on and on.

The more stress infants and young children experience, the more likely they are to suffer serious adverse consequences. These consequences carry major economic costs. The children become drains on our health care, legal, educational and social service systems. We also lose the contributions they could make to our country.

Many aboriginal communities have already made huge changes. We can make even more changes when we work together. When we merge expertise and knowledge based in science with the culture, strengths and resources of First Nations communities we can make changes.

Some of those changes can influence and support parenting. This finding, known as family-centred or patient-centred care, has made a significant difference in healthcare delivery in some of our most sophisticated healthcare sites (such as Sickkids Hospital in Toronto). When we recognize the authority, responsibility, strengths and rights of the individuals and families who seek healthcare services, we improve outcomes.

The same principle has been applied and can be expanded in developing a collaborative approach to delivering health care in indigenous communities, in keeping with Jordan's Principle. Both sides must be open to collaboration, to working together in meaningful ways. Each side must recognize the strengths of the other. Communities must be strengthened so that families can be supported and infants can develop the inner capacity to deal with stress.

We challenge political leaders to address the plight of aboriginal babies. Give them a healthy start. Give their parents the chance to protect babies from toxic and traumatic stresses. Give them and their communities a chance to contribute to Canada.

Specifically, we demand that our governments focus on the needs of First Nations babies to start off life healthy. There are legal arguments and economic arguments that demand that we address this issue. There is a moral argument: what in fact are our Canadian values?

Jean-Victor Wittenberg is head of the Infant Psychiatry Program and Co-Chair Infant Mental Health Promotion, at The Hospital for Sick Children.

Michael Dan is founding donor of the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute, University of Toronto.

Cindy Blackstock is Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society.

Isadore Day is Wiindawtegowinini Ontario Regional Chief.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/10/08/first-nations-health-crisis-is-a-canadian-problem.html>

Aboriginal History

Archivists seeking names of Arctic Inuit in historic photos

“From the 1930s, we’ve also had elders recognize themselves as children and babies”

STEVE DUCHARME, October 02, 2015 – 4:00 pm



An example of some of the photos that Hudson’s Bay Company archivists are hoping to identify. From left: a boy photographed around 1940, possibly by Dr. R. L. Sutton; an Inuit man photographed at Great Whale River in 1938; and, two Inuit men photographed around 1930, possibly by Harvey Bassett. If you know who these people are, send an email to hbca@gov.mb.ca. (PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY ARCHIVES)



A unidentified Inuk girl in Tuktoyaktuk, around 1954. Photographed by Don Blair. (PHOTO COURTESY HBC ARCHIVES)



Two boys from Arctic Bay holding radiosonde balloons, around 1951. Photographed by John G. Cormack. (PHOTO COURTESY HBC ARCHIVES)

Have you seen this face? The Hudson's Bay Co. is hoping that you have.

But there's one small catch — it would have been more than 40 years ago.

The HBC Archives in Winnipeg are calling on the public to help identify a collection of photos taken in Inuit communities between 1920 and 1960.

“We're inviting community members who recognize people in the photographs to share this knowledge with us,” said HBC archivist Michelle Rydz.

A largely unidentified collection of 2,000 photos have been digitized for the project and released online, under the banner Names and Knowledge: Discovering Indigenous People, Places and Knowledge in the HBC Archives.

The photos were taken in and around the HBC's extensive network of old trading posts, documenting a huge swath of Canada's Arctic in the last century, from the Yukon to Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador.

The quality of images ranges from professional, posed photographs to candid, amateur snapshots taken by HBC employees in their free time.

But the photos all feature Inuit families and their communities.

Time, however, is not on the HBC's side. Many of the images in the photos will soon be too old for any living Inuk to identify.

"We have people who have brought in their children to see photos of their namesake. They had never seen a photo of the person they were named after," said Rydz, speaking about some of the project's early successes.

"From the 1930s, we've also had elders recognize themselves as children and babies."

The project is part of a larger effort by the HBC Archives to provide Canadians with a more "holistic" perspective in their collection.

"The non-indigenous, non-Inuit, perspective is quite well documented in the Hudson's Bay Co. holdings," said Rydz.

"We want to be able to have [Inuit] communities feel that these records belong to them as well and we want to be able to make them as accessible to them as possible."

The project is still in its early stages, but grassroots efforts by Rydz and her team have proven that positive identification, even with the oldest photographs, is still possible.

While attending Hudson's Bay meetings in Rankin Inlet Sept. 24, the archive team set up a booth in their hotel lobby showcasing several of the collection's photographs.

"We had about 30 people from the community come out and we were able to identify over 40 photos within a couple of hours," said Rydz.

Down the road, as more photos are identified, Rydz and her team hope to feature the histories of specific communities through the collection.

"We hope to be able to do some sort of exhibit at some point — it's in the back of our minds," she said.

If you can identify someone or something in a photo, you can have your name included as a source in the descriptions at the HBC Archives or you can remain anonymous.

Hard copies of the photographs can also be provided to family members who recognize a relative.

Individuals interested in viewing the collection can access this remotely from the [Archives of Manitoba website](#) by typing “Inuit” into the search field.

If you think you recognize a person or place in one of the photographs, the Hudson’s Bay Archives can be contacted through email: hbc@mb.ca or by telephone at 204-945-4949.



Two unidentified women and two children around 1939. Photographed by Dr. R. L. Sutton. (PHOTO COURTESY HBC ARCHIVES)

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiagonline.ca/stories/article/65674archivists_seeking_names_of_arctic_inuit_in_historic_photos/

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Indigenous Inspiration: 7 Winners of the Indspire Awards in Canada

[Sam Laskaris](#)

10/6/15

A star hockey player. An elder who survived residential-school abuse. An accountant.

These and many more indigenous people in Canada—14 in all—are being honored as recipients of the 2016 Indspire Awards (formerly the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards), presented annually since 1993 to First Nation, Métis and Inuit people who have distinguished themselves in various categories.

In highlighting indigenous achievements, the awards dispel oft-held misconceptions, said Indspire president and CEO Roberta Jamieson.

“They challenge stereotypes, and they inform the public at large about the contributions our people have made and continue to make,” Jamieson told Indian Country Today Media Network. “They also break down barriers.”

Winners are selected by a jury whose members include previous award recipients. Hundreds of people were nominated, Jamieson said, and narrowing it down to just 14 winners is an arduous task. Jury members have to balance out the list based on not just gender and geography but also must try to get a relatively equal amount of First Nation, Metis and Inuit individuals. Besides the 11 people selected for career achievements, there were three youth recipients, aged 27 and under.

“It is tough,” said Jamieson, who also serves on the jury. “But it’s a great challenge to have.”

Sports: Carey Price



Carey Price (Photo: Associated Press)

In the sports category is Carey Price, the Montreal Canadiens’ star goaltender and the National Hockey League’s most valuable player this past season. Price, Ulkatcho First Nation in what is today British Columbia, will receive his latest accolade, along with the other recipients, during the Indspire Awards Gala, scheduled for February 16 in Vancouver.

Lifetime Achievement: Chief Robert Joseph



Chief Robert Joseph (Photo: Courtesy of Indspire)

Chief Robert Joseph from the Gwawaaenuk First Nation in British Columbia, was chosen in the Lifetime Achievement category. Joseph, 77, suffered physical and sexual abuse during his own youth at a residential school. He went on to become executive director of the Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society, formed in 2002. He later co-chaired a United Church–led call for a public inquiry into residential schools, which led to the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, established in 2008. Joseph also helped organize the 70,000-person Walk for Reconciliation in Vancouver in 2013.

“He’s come through as a champion,” Jamieson said of Joseph’s life journey.

Culture, Heritage and Spirituality: Chief Jim Ochiese and Mae Louise Campbell



Chief Jim Ochiese (Photo: Courtesy of Indspire)

Meanwhile, there were two individuals this year chosen as Indspire Award recipients via the Culture, Heritage and Spirituality category. They are Chief Jim Ochiese and Mae Louise Campbell.

Ochiese is the chief for Alberta’s Foothills Ojibway First Nation, while Campbell is an Ojibway/Saulteaux elder from Manitoba. Now 82, Campbell is the Elder in Residence at the University of Manitoba’s Faculty of Social Work and Red River College.



Mae Louise Campbell (Photo: Courtesy of Indspire)

Youth: Christian Kowalchuk, Laura Arngna'naaq, Zondra Roy

The three Youth award recipients were Christian Kowalchuk, Laura Arngna'naaq and Zondra Roy.



Christian Kowalchuk (Photo: Courtesy of Indspire)

Kowalchuk, from Alberta's Big Stone Cree Nation, is a former star collegiate pitcher who is now an assistant coach with the University of Arkansas men's baseball team.



Laura Arngna'naaq (Photo: Courtesy Indspire)

Arngna'naaq hails from Baker Lake, Nunavut, but now works in Toronto as one of the few Inuk chartered accountants in Canada.

Roy, a Métis youth activist, is also a fourth-year student at the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan.



Zondra Roy (Photo: Courtesy Indspire)

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/10/06/indigenous-inspiration-7-winners-indspire-awards-canada-161987>

Alderville celebrates First Nations Women's Day

Event gives women a chance to pamper themselves



ALDERVILLE -- Wanda McIvor, executive co-ordinator for the Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig, Inc. Regional Women's Shelter, left, Melody Crowe, and Charlene Stevenson chatted at the 10th annual First Nations Women's Day held at the Alderville Community Centre on October 2, 2015.

Northumberland News

By [Karen Longwell](#), Oct 07, 2015

ALDERVILLE -- Women took time to relax and connect at Alderville's 10th annual First Nations Women's Day celebration.

The Women's Day is an event hosted annually in the first week of October by Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig, Inc. Regional Women's Shelter for the local Michi Saagiig, Nishnaabeg community.

This year, on Oct. 2, about 75 women gathered at the Alderville Community Centre for the day-long event, which included speakers, lunch, self-care treatments and tarot card and tea leaf readers. The day began with Melody Crowe leading a traditional smudge ceremony and opening prayer, said Wanda McIvor, executive co-ordinator for the Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig, Inc. Regional Women's Shelter. Ms. Crowe is an Alderville resident, traditional teacher and Ojibwe speaker.

The purpose of the day, which coincides with national First Nations Women's Day on Oct. 4, is for women to take time for themselves.

“It basically about self care and looking after yourself,” said Ms. McIvor.

Women could choose treatments such as facials and hair cuts.

“It’s nice to pamper yourself,” said Lezlie Appleton who enjoyed a manicure at the event.

The noon speaker, Rick Beaver, spoke on this year’s Women’s Day theme, which was Connecting to Mother Earth.

The Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig, Inc. Regional Women’s Shelter can house up to 15 women and children, said Ms. McIvor. It serves women from across the south-east region of the province, she said. Women do not have to be Aboriginal to access the shelter, she added. The shelter also offers a 24/7 support crisis line at 1-800-388-5171 for men, women or children to call.

Direct Link: <http://www.northumberlandnews.com/community-story/5947083-alderville-celebrates-first-nations-women-s-day/>

Regina woman upset over aboriginal-themed Halloween costumes

Cindy Freeman says costumes like 'Huron Honey' are offensive

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 11:56 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 7:59 PM CT



"Reservation Royalty" is one of the Halloween costumes for adults on display at a Regina store. (Submitted by Cindy Freeman)

A Regina woman is expressing dismay after finding numerous aboriginal-themed Halloween costumes on display in a local store.

Cindy Freeman says she was recently in a Spirit Halloween store where she saw costumes with such names as "Noble Warrior," "Huron Honey" and "Queen of the Tribe."

She posted photos of the costumes to her Facebook page.

"I feel like these costumes promote an incredibly negative stereotype that is outdated and considered inappropriate," Freeman said on Facebook.

Freeman told CBC News that she was surprised the items were offered for sale.

"I was really surprised," she said. "I thought, 'This has to be a mistake'".

Freeman teaches elementary school and asked her students what they thought of the costumes.

"My students were really offended," she said. "Most of them are First Nations and they were really offended and they wanted to share their thoughts and they had some really interesting things to say."

Freeman quoted one student who said, "Seeing these costumes makes me feel like I'm being made fun of, like I'm nothing."

She said she spoke to a manager at the store but did not get the impression the person would remove the items from the shelves.

Spirit Halloween is headquartered in the U.S. and when CBC News contacted the company they said their lawyer would call. However, there was no immediate response from that person.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/regina-woman-upset-over-aboriginal-themed-halloween-costumes-1.3262662>

Valley lawyer wins prestigious indigenous professionals award

posted Oct 7, 2015 at 10:00 AM



Mark Stevenson has been named an Indspire Award recipient.

Erin Halueschak

A former G.P. Vanier grad and chief negotiator for the K'ómoks First Nation is receiving the highest honour the indigenous community bestows upon its own achievers.

Born in the Comox Valley, Mark Stevenson's work in truth and justice for indigenous people is what made him one of the recipients for the Indspire Awards, to be held in Vancouver in early 2016.

"It's very humbling to be a part of (the awards)," said Stevenson from his law office in Victoria. "From the aboriginal community, it's the highest award that the community is involved in."

The awards were created in 1993 in conjunction with the United Nation's International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

They recognize indigenous professionals and youth who demonstrate outstanding career achievement.

With a background in constitutional law, Stevenson began working for the Privy Council in Ottawa in 1982, focusing on indigenous constitution matters.

He was the chief treaty negotiator with the Government of British Columbia for seven years and part of the team for the Charlottetown Accord.

He has also negotiated a wide variety of agreements on behalf of Indigenous People including oil, gas and mineral revenue sharing agreements, pipeline, forestry and impact benefit agreements linked with hydro mega-projects.

Stevenson is also the founding director and past president of the Indigenous Bar Association and the founding director and former chair of the Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto.

In 2009, he received the Indigenous Peoples' Counsel designation from the Indigenous Bar Association for his work.

He noted coming from a Metis family originally from Alberta, aboriginal issues - whether it is Inuit, Indian or Metis - are a constant in his life.

“There is an unfairness of settlement, and unfairness in the rights of Aboriginal Peoples.

“I knew treaty negotiations were a good venue to resolve (some of the issues) and a useful tool.”

As a negotiator for the K'ómoks First Nation, Stevenson said the treaty is complicated due to an earlier land grant from the E&N Railway.

In 1875, the Railway Act expropriated a large portion of KFN traditional territory and the land grant was completed without acknowledgment of their right or title to tradition territory, and failed to compensate KFN.

A lot of the land was given away to the mining and logging industries, added Stevenson.

“(Because of that) there is now a shortage of land and timber owned by the Crown and water too because BC Hydro has a lot of it.

“This makes a very big difference (in negotiations) without water and timber.”

There are 14 categories for Indspire Awards ranging from arts to health and sports. For more information on the awards, visit indspire.ca.

Direct Link: <http://www.comoxvalleyrecord.com/news/331091841.html>

Aboriginal Inequality & Poverty

Street Store offers clothes and dignity for those struggling

Event will see a pop-up store offer free items for the homeless and under resourced.



Kerri Johnston and Miranda Beach of the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre show off some of the many items that will be available at the Street Store event this Saturday.

Published on Thu Oct 01 2015

An event at the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre will offer people who are struggling a chance to pick up some clothes, coats, boots and other items, and with dignity.

The Street Store event will see the friendship centre turned into a pop-up clothing outlet Saturday, but everything will be offered for free for people that are homeless or under-resourced.

“So we collect donated items of clothing and we set it up as a store where they can come and do their shopping all for free,” said organizer Heather Plett.

Plett said people who are struggling should not feel they just have to settle for whatever handout someone gives them, and should feel a sense of dignity while looking for clothes and other items.

“It’s an opportunity for them to have a real shopping experience. They get to pick what they like and fits them.”

The Street Store is also a good chance for people who won’t have a regular place to stay this winter to pick up warm clothes, said Plett.

Free haircuts and coffee and snacks will also be provided.

The Street Store happens at the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre at 45 Robinson Ave. this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Direct Link: <http://www.metronews.ca/news/winnipeg/2015/10/02/street-store-offers-clothes-and-dignity-for-those-struggling.html>

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

SaskGaming focuses on hiring more aboriginals

By Emma Graney, Leader-Post October 5, 2015

For more than 20 years, SaskGaming has had a goal - a workforce composed of at least 50 per cent aboriginal employees.

Despite being one of the most diverse employers among Saskatchewan Crown corporations, it has yet to reach that goal.

As of Aug. 31, 39.9 per cent of SaskGaming employees were aboriginal.

Over the past five years, that number has consistently hovered around 40 per cent, hitting a high of 42.3 per cent in 2011.

According to Blaine Pilatzke, executive director of human resources at SaskGaming, the 50 per cent goal was established in 1994, through the gaming framework agreement between the province and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

It was built on the premise that there would be two SaskGaming casinos - one in Regina, one in Saskatoon.

A plebiscite scrapped plans for the Saskatoon casino, but the goal - based on the relatively high percentage of aboriginals in the two cities - remained.

Pilatzke attributed missing the target to the ratio of aboriginal to non-aboriginals in Regina and Moose Jaw (the latter's population is only about four per cent aboriginal), the "competitive nature of the workforce," and "the nature of gaming and our non-traditional gaming hours."

That's not to say Sask-Gaming hasn't tried. In 2013, it established an Aboriginal Representative Workforce Team to "attempt to get a better understanding of why aboriginal employees were leaving us at a higher rate than others."

That resulted in a threeyear plan to prioritize recruitment policies, procedures and programs that support aboriginal employees and encourage them to stay.

The other part of the plan is "raising awareness about the benefits of diversity among all SaskGaming employees," Pilatzke said.

While Pilatzke has "a sense" that the 50 per cent aboriginal hires goal is "symbolic" more than anything, he said it also acts as a "guidepost" for the Crown corporation.

"I don't want to minimize it ... because we take our role seriously in terms of providing as many employment opportunities for people of aboriginal ancestry as we possibly can," he said.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/saskgaming+focuses+hiring+more+aboriginals/11414616/story.html>

Aboriginal Politics

Controversy facing ex-Harper spokesperson over Aboriginal Affairs contracts echoes Bruce Carson scandal, says NDP

[National News](#) | October 1, 2015 by [Jorge Barrera](#)



Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

The federal Aboriginal Affairs department is denying a Starbucks meeting arranged by the prime minister's former spokesperson led to the awarding of contracts to a blue-chip lobbying firm.

Ethics Commissioner Mary Dawson is currently reviewing the case, [CTV is reporting](#).

Lobbying firm Hill+Knowlton received two communications contracts from Aboriginal Affairs in May and June of this year following a meeting arranged by Jason MacDonald, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's former spokesperson, *CTV* reported.

CTV reported that the firm landed the contracts after a Starbucks meeting between Hill+Knowlton vice-president David Rodier, who is currently on Liberal leader Justin

Trudeau's campaign team, and the federal department's then-director general of communications Bernard Etzinger.

The meeting was reportedly arranged and also attended by MacDonald, when he was two months out of his job as senior spokesperson for the Prime Minister's Office. MacDonald was also a former spokesperson for the Aboriginal Affairs minister's office.

Aboriginal Affairs said the contracts, worth \$14,437 and \$12,657, were not awarded through Etzinger but by the Lands and Economic Development sector under a standing offer with the firm dating back to September 2014.

The department said the contracts were for communications work with the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board and their roundtable on northern infrastructure held in Whitehorse on June. 26.

"The two contracts in question are under the responsibility of the Lands and Economic Development Branch and had no involvement from the (Aboriginal Affairs) director general of communications," said the department in a statement.

MacDonald, who currently works for Hill+Knowlton, sent a statement to *APTN* saying he did nothing wrong.

"I am conscious of the rules governing the activities of designated public office holders once they leave government. All of my post-government activities are in compliance with those rules – including the required 'cooling off' period – and I will ensure that continues to be the case," said the statement.

Etzinger now works for the Privy Council Office, which is essentially the prime minister's department.

NDP candidate Charlie Angus said the current controversy over the MacDonald case carries shades of the Bruce Carson scandal. Both involved a former Harper aide allegedly using their contacts to get something from Aboriginal Affairs.

"There are certainly really disturbing parallels between Bruce Carson, a close Conservative insider, tied to the prime minister who used his contacts to try to wrangle contracts at Indian Affairs," said Angus.

Carson is currently awaiting a judge to rule on his guilt or innocence after wrapping up a two-day trial this month on a charge of influence peddling. The charge stems from his attempts to promote an Ottawa water filtration company with Aboriginal Affairs and federal ministers in hopes of landing contracts with First Nation communities suffering from water woes. The water company had a side-deal with Carson's former fiancée, a former escort, guaranteeing her a cut of revenues from sales to First Nations.

Angus said the latest MacDonald controversy also casts Aboriginal Affairs in an ugly light.

“What would bother most Canadians is that at Aboriginal Affairs we see program dollars that are underfunded...and then, to be giving out contracts to crony insiders to the prime minister, it just stinks,” he said.

Angus said the NDP is also currently considering whether to file a complaint against MacDonald with Dawson.

“We are certainly very concerned about this. Yet another ethics abuse by a Harper insider, stepping out of the PMO,” said Angus. “We are looking at an issue on a complaint on this. Mary Dawson seems to be extremely gun-shy of investigating things during elections. Her job is not to worry about this is coming up in an election, but to establish clear rules for reporting public office holders.”

Angus said another parallel exists between the MacDonald and Carson cases in that they both involved a current member of Trudeau’s campaign team.

While MacDonald set up a meeting involving Rodier, who is on Trudeau’s campaign team, Carson is facing a separate set of charges stemming from his lobbying on behalf of an energy think-tank with strong links to Trudeau’s [current campaign co-chair Daniel Gagnier](#). Carson will face trial on those charges next year.

Gagnier was vice-chair of the Energy Policy Institute of Canada (EPIC) during a portion of the time that became the focus of the RCMP’s investigation into Carson, according to an affidavit filed by the Mounties. The affidavit alleges that Gagnier helped Carson land a meeting between EPIC and provincial energy ministers. The RCMP said in the document that it believes Carson’s work around the meeting constituted illegal lobbying.

Angus said Trudeau should sideline Rodier and Gagnier until after the election.

“I think if Mr. Trudeau was going to really take new politics seriously, he would say people who are involved in this kind of behaviour need to explain themselves and maybe step aside at least until the campaign is over,” said Angus. “Knowing the Liberals old-boys network I am not holding my breath that he will step up and show leadership on this.”

The Liberals offered a terse response to Angus’ charge.

“All rules were followed. We will not provide further comment,” said the statement, which applied to both Rodier and Gagnier.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/01/controversy-facing-ex-harper-spokesperson-over-aboriginal-affairs-contracts-echoes-bruce-carson-scandal-says-ndp/>

Cuthand: Focus on niqab overshadows key aboriginal issues

By Doug Cuthand, The Starphoenix October 2, 2015



Doug Cuthand

The issue raised by the wearing of a niqab during citizenship ceremonies has become one of the central issues in this election campaign.

If that's a major issue, then I can only suggest that we must live in a pretty great country. An outsider might conclude that Canada is such a perfect society that a petty issue such as a niqab can dominate an election campaign.

Poverty, health, First Nations and Métis issues and others have remained off the table even though they affect many more people than a handful of women who want to wear the niqab.

When it comes to the niqab, we have been down a similar road before. Scores of Indian boys had their braids cut off when they went to boarding school. We had no say, we couldn't fight back. While the removal of braids was a decision made by the residential schools, other restrictions were actually legislated in the Indian Act.

For example, the sundance and potlatch were outlawed in 1885. And the government amended the Indian Act in 1914 so that our people needed official permission if they wanted to wear their traditional regalia in a public setting. Otherwise, if they showed up wearing those "costumes" as the Indian Act called them, they could be fined or thrown in jail.

Canadians like to portray themselves as a liberal, multicultural democracy. However, racism existed in our past and continues to exist today under the surface. Multiculturalism, it would appear, exists only in food and dance and special events while the real culture and beliefs of various ethnicities are ignored in the hope that they will assimilate into the Canadian mainstream.

Canadians are uncomfortable with people who are different, and women who wear a niqab make an easy target. However, in reality there are very few Muslim women who wear the niqab, and even fewer who want to wear it during a citizenship ceremony.

Is it not unreasonable to accommodate these women and have a female citizenship staff member verify their identity? The discussion around the niqab is one that should take place within the Muslim community. Some say it's not mandated by the Qur'an while others say it's a part of the culture of desert tribes that preceded Islam.

In any event, it's not an issue that should preoccupy Canadians. I won't lose any sleep over it.

This election campaign has seen an unprecedented level of racism, either in blatant attacks against groups such as Muslim Canadians or in the still neglect of First Nations issues. While the niqab issue involves only a few Muslim women, First Nations issues affect more than 1.4 million aboriginal Canadians. And while the reaction to the niqab has been shrill, any attention to aboriginal issues has been nonexistent or muted.

A couple of nuances have revealed Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's view of aboriginal people. His comment about "old stock" Canadians reveals his disregard for the First Canadians. And when referring to northerners, he referred to the Inuit as "those people." These can be defined as small slips, but they reflect a pattern of neglect and animosity toward aboriginal issues.

Prior to the election campaign, the major parties were invited to address the annual meeting of the Assembly of First Nations.

The Liberals and NDP made presentations, but the Conservatives were conspicuously absent. APTN is planning three town hall programs with the party leaders, and so far the Greens, Liberals and NDP have committed. According to a statement from the broadcaster, the Conservatives were invited but declined to participate.

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented its list of recommendations, the Liberals and NDP responded but the Conservatives demurred, saying they would wait until the final report comes out, which will be next year, long after the election.

At a recent all-candidates forum, John Duncan, the former Tory Indian Affairs minister, stated that poverty and unemployment was a problem for local people and not the federal government. No other group in Canada would be subject to such a cavalier response, but in

Canada today it's considered appropriate. Serious underfunding of education, social services and other social programs are not generated locally but are a product of the Conservative government in Ottawa. Duncan should know, since he has served as the minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

It is the funding shortfall that has been a direct contributor to shortfalls in education, housing and the quality of life among First Nations.

Even the serious issues of missing and murdered aboriginal women and the suicide epidemic on many First Nations and Inuit communities have been ignored. The youth suicide rate in Nunavut is 40 times the national average.

It's a national scandal that an issue as petty as the niqab is used to instill fear and racism in the populace while the real problems facing out people have been belittled or ignored.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/cuthand+focus+niqab+overshadows+aboriginal+issues/11408137/story.html>

Coffee, chats and lots of driving: getting out the aboriginal vote in Northeast B.C.

[Jonny Wakefield](#) / Alaska Highway News
October 2, 2015 08:30 AM



Connie Greeyes speaks with a man at the Doig River First Nation Band hall Tuesday about registering to vote. Greeyes has been traveling to the Peace Region's First Nations in recent weeks as part of an aboriginal voter registration drive. Jonny Wakefield Photo

Seated behind a table covered with voter registration guides, pens and magnets, Connie Greeyes calls out to a man walking through the band hall of the Doig River First Nation.

"How's it going, Sam?" she says as he shuffles to the table. He's wearing a full denim suit, a camouflage cap and a rodeo rider's belt buckle. He's doing fine, he says.

"I've got information about registering to vote in the federal election," says Greeyes.

"Oh, okay," Sam says. "That's on..."

"October 19. Are you registered?" "Might as well," he says.

Greeyes tells him about advance voting, how to check if he's eligible. They talk about

family for a bit, and then Sam says goodbye.

Greyeyes has been having this conversation, in some form, on First Nations reserves across northeast B.C. This election season, she's working as an aboriginal community relations officer with Elections Canada.

Small interactions like these, repeated in band halls from Fort Nelson to McLeod Lake, is what getting out the aboriginal vote looks like.

"It's hit and miss," Greyeyes said of the registration drive on Tuesday. "It's very informal, just sit down and talk to people as they walk by, say 'you know, here's the information on how to register yourself to vote.'"

It's a vote that has the potential to shake up a safe Conservative riding. Prince George-Peace River-Northern Rockies, the federal riding that contains Dawson Creek and Fort St. John, has the third-highest aboriginal population in B.C. at 13.5 per cent. (Skeena-Bukley Valley leads the way with 33.5 per cent; Cariboo-Prince George follows with 16.4.) Nationally, the riding is 24th for aboriginal population.

The riding had a lower-than-average turnout of 54 per cent in 2011, so a significant increase in the number of First Nations people voting could have a noticeable impact.

Part of Greyeyes' job is to cut through the barriers to voting aboriginal people face.

"There's the physical aspect of getting into town to go and vote, getting to that polling station, getting our elders there," she said. "It's difficult."

Doig River lies about an hour north of Fort St. John over rural and gravel roads. A member of Treaty 8, it has a population of around 300 and is best known for its annual rodeo. Unlike some other nations, which have polling stations on-reserve, Doig residents must travel into town to cast a ballot.

There's also the nature of work in the oil patch, where many band members are employed.

While employers are required to allow their employees time to vote, many are in worker camps three hours away from the nearest polling station.

"You're asking that employer to let all of his employees go for basically two-thirds of the day," she said. "Are you going to be the one guy who says 'you know what, legally I'm allowed to go vote?'"

New rules around vouching and proof of address, poor Internet access and even language differences (Greyeyes' 83-year-old mother speaks mostly Cree) are other factors that hinder turnout.

Ten years ago, Greyeyes herself "couldn't care less" about voting. Before that, she

struggled with cocaine and alcohol addiction.

After getting clean, she became an advocate for missing and murdered women in the region. She personally knows 14 women who have disappeared or been killed.

Because of her activist work, she's well-known in most of the region's First Nations communities, which led Elections Canada to approach her about a job in the lead up to the election. Instead of campaigning for a particular party, she opted to take the non-partisan position.

Among the people Greyeyes pushed to register was Drew Davis, a 29-year-old crane operator's apprentice who first voted in the 2013 provincial election.

He plans to vote this time around, but was unclear on how the prime minister is chosen under Canada's parliamentary system.

"I was new at it, the parties and stuff," he said. "After (Connie) explained it today, it made more sense. I'm not sure which parties fit the right criteria at this point, they're all pulling each other down."

Also new to voting was Mark Apsassin, 31, a heavy equipment operator.

"I want to get registered, so I can vote every year," he said. "Every vote counts. It's really important for aboriginal communities to vote. It makes a big difference."

Neither was sure who would get their votes.

High First Nations voter turnout in the region could hurt the local Conservatives, who won by a 36 per cent margin in 2011— though not necessarily.

Some nations with polling stations on-reserve went NDP, while others went for the Tories.

In the remote Kwadacha First Nation, 86 per cent of people voted NDP. As did the Kelly Lake Cree Nation (59 per cent), the Ingenika Point Indian settlement near Prince George (66 per cent) and Moberly Lake (46 per cent). McLeod Lake, meanwhile, went to Bob Zimmer with 39 per cent of the vote.

Whether the presence of an aboriginal candidate in the race— the NDP's Kathi Dickie— will influence First Nations voters remains to be seen.

Throughout the afternoon at Doig, Greyeyes gave registration information to several dozen people. Whether they do register, and who they vote for, is out of her hands.

But for Greyeyes, the act of voting is as important as the result.

”I really got to the point in my life where I realized it’s important to vote,” she said. “If I want change or I’m unhappy with the way things are going in the country, it’s my duty to go and vote.”

- See more at: <http://www.alaskahighwaynews.ca/regional-news/coffee-chats-and-lots-of-driving-getting-out-the-aboriginal-vote-in-northeast-b-c-1.2075201#sthash.Kb1IumHU.dpuf>

Young First Nations voters in Yukon on why they’ll cast ballots

A CBC Yukon panel discussion with three young voters

By A New Day, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 01, 2015 5:35 PM CT Last Updated: Oct 01, 2015 5:35 PM CT

Young aboriginal Canadians have traditionally been under-represented at the voting booths. But some young First Nations people in Yukon hope this federal election will be different.

Sandi Coleman, host of CBC Yukon’s *A New Day*, spoke to three young Yukoners about what’s motivating them to cast ballots this time around.



Dana Tizya-Tramm (CBC)



Steven Kormendy (submitted)

Dana Tizya-Tramm, 28, is a member of the Vuntut Gwichin First Nation;

Steven Kormendy, 23, is a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation;

and **Geri-Lee Buyck**, 24, is a member the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation.

Portions of the discussion have been edited and condensed.

Have you ever voted in a federal election before?

Dana Tizya-Tramm: That's a big fat no.

Steven Kormendy: Yes, I have. The 2011 election. I'm pretty sure I was just turning 18 or 19 at that point, and that was my first election I voted in.



Geri-Lee Buyck (submitted)

Geri-Lee Buyck: I will be a first-time voter this year.

Why are you voting this time?

Buyck: Just realizing more and more so over the years how I'm not happy or liking what's going on with everything, basically. I want to use the little voice that I have and

make a big difference for the outcome, and encourage all those [others] to do so as well, to show them that if we all stick together we can make a difference.

Tizya-Tramm: I parallel a lot of what Geri says. I hadn't voted before. I was coming from a place of learned helplessness, where it's just the whole entity is a lot bigger than me, and it's always been, and there's no real changing it.

But I think, and I think with Geri too, that Bill S-6 gets us off the sidelines and into the game. I like to say that I became politicized, I'm not a political person. I always check my values against what my grandparents would say. And their teachings all go toward nature, and understanding and co-operating with it. So something like Bill S-6 really shows an ugly side of industry, money, and political power and these can align to misrepresent people.

What is the number one issue in this election?

Kormendy: The environment, the protection of the environment. I can't speak for all Canadians, but I can say for me personally the protection of the environment, and the policies and legislation that go along with that, such as Bill S-6, or the imposition of Bill S-6.

Buyck: It's definitely the environment and climate change that is really frustrating me the most, that it's not being taken seriously. As a First Nations youth, I've always been hearing our leaders and elders were thinking seven generations down the road.

Tizya-Tramm: I really hope the environment is the number one issue for Canadians. We have some of the highest sources of fresh water in the world, we have a lot of open land, and we're in an industrious age. So we have to tread lightly, especially with respect to climate change. We have all kinds of alarm bells ringing.

But I think that for overall, general Canadians, I feel that the legitimacy and transparency of our government is definitely an issue. I feel in my bones that a lot of Canadians don't like the way [Stephen Harper] conducts his secretive legislations.

Compared to 2011, do you feel that more of your peers will vote now, or vote for the first time?

Kormendy: Most definitely. This really comes down to the bills that have been put in place recently by the Conservative government.

People are starting to see the fear-mongering tactics put forward by the Conservative government, and this has a lot of people scared. I don't support Bill C-51 and I know a lot of classmates and peers don't support Bill C-51. And I think this is probably one of the biggest things that's bringing people to the polls right now.

Buyck: Yes, I do. There are many of us that are bringing the topic to discussion. We have a date set aside next week for those who are unsure how to register and whatnot, to come to our government office and get help and assistance to register.

A lot of it has to do with what's been mentioned — Bill S-6 and Bill C-51, all of that's very big. And it's that fear that I think is driving those to get more involved by voting in this election.

I won't ask who you're voting for, but have you made up your minds?

Tizya-Tramm: I have, but it's hard.

Kormendy: I'm really split right now, and this really more or less comes down to our electoral system, and having to vote for a party that may not necessarily represent who you want to vote for locally. But I think that I have a way to overcome this. I'm about 80 per cent made up on who I'm going to vote for.

Buyck: I'm kind of in the same boat as Steven. I'm worried about splitting the vote so I'm really trying to get more of a feel of where others may side, a little bit. But in all honesty, just to put it out there, I am wearing orange today!

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/young-first-nations-voters-in-yukon-on-why-they-ll-cast-ballots-1.3253082>

Local election issues – Native Affairs

By [Elaine Della-Mattia](#), Sault Star

Friday, October 2, 2015 10:21:59 EDT AM



Some Canadians believe the upcoming federal election is the most important one in recent history that will shape this country's future.

For First Nation communities, the same philosophy is also taking shape.

The Rally the First Nation Vote campaign was launched in Garden River First Nation and has been gaining momentum across the country as election day approaches.

Sault Ste. Marie candidates, and the political parties they represent, are aware the Rally the First Nation Vote campaign is taking shape. All argue they're the best choice for First Nation voters and all say they believe in partnerships and nation-to-nation building.

Incumbent Conservative Bryan Hayes insists his government has been working in partnership with First Nations since the Conservatives formed government.

"People often hear what's needed on First Nations but folks need to know we've made investments and supported them all along the way," Hayes said.

Investments have been made into 243 major capital projects in 177 First Nation territories and legislation has been implemented ensuring there is safe drinking water in aboriginal communities, he said.

In addition, 22,000 First Nation students have received support for their post secondary studies, almost 12,000 new housing units have been financially supported and a further 21,668 First Nation homes have received funding for renovations, he said.

New Democrat Skip Morrison counters that the Conservatives have not done nearly enough to support the First Nation people, either those living on Reserves or the sizable number of electorate who are urban Anishinabek in the Sault Ste. Marie area.

"First Nation leaders and their members are very politically aware of the oppressive government that has been in existence with the Conservatives for the past decade," he said.

Morrison said he's drafted out the New Democrat platform and provided it to the Garden River and Batchewana First Nation chief and council, requesting that they examine and discuss it.

"It's important to be serious about all the electorate and we believe in nation to nation discussions," he said.

Liberal Terry Sheehan said talking with First Nation has to occur more than at election time.

"You can't just be there at election time like the others are and they've noticed that," Sheehan said. "I'm out talking to them, attending various meetings with them and attending pow wows and this is all year long, not just after the election was called."

Sheehan said that First Nation people participate in their own band elections, but often see federal or provincial elections differently.

"It's important that they participate in this election because they haven't been treated well by the Harper government," he said.

All three Sault Ste. Marie candidates agree that earning trust of Aboriginal people is important and something that is needed to move forward and ensure that a nation to nation relationship can be created and fostered.

Sheehan said that's demonstrated in the Liberal's promise to call for an inquiry into the 1,200 murdered and missing Aboriginal women.

"We were the first to call for this and it's about trust and about nation to nation building," he said.

Morrison said the New Democrats plan is to launch an inquiry into the murdered and missing Aboriginal women within 120 days of forming government.

His party leader Tom Mulcair has also promised to implement a cabinet level committee that will ensure all government decisions respect treaty rights and inherent rights of First Nations.

Hayes notes that trust is something that is earned and built up over time through communication and actions.

"We've built trust through our actions and communication and relationship building by keeping our promises and doing the things we said we would," he said. "That's what I'm campaigning on. We delivered what we promised and that builds trust."

The candidates take different approaches on what they will do with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and its recommendations, which were released earlier this year.

The commission's mandate was to guide and inspire Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in a process of reconciliation by revealing the residential school experience and longstanding issues. It's hoped that the recommendations work towards renewing relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Hayes said he hasn't read the final report and the background information that supplements the 94 recommendations.

"There are thousands of pages of background to read and with the election, I have not had the time to do that, but I'm confident that our government will analyze them (the recommendations) and cost them out," he said.

Hayes said he's not in a position to say if some recommendations are more significant than others or which ones should receive priority implementation.

"Everything will be done in consultation with the government but we need to look at the report, understand it, and see what it would take in a partnership with the First Nations and service providers, to implement," he said.

Sheehan says all the recommendations are important and the key is to prioritize their implementation through consultation with the First Nations.

“The issues identified in the report and the abuse that occurred in the residential schools occurred over time and they will be implemented,” he said.

The Liberals have already promised to invest in education for First Nations students from kindergarten through high school, as well as at the post-secondary education level.

The investment of \$515 million per year for kindergarten to Grade 12 will rise to \$750 million by the end of the Liberal government’s first mandate, Sheehan said.

A total core investment of \$2.6 billion will be made in First Nation education over the course of four years, he said.

Morrison takes an approach similar to Sheehan’s.

“It would be presumptuous of me to assume which of the 94 recommendations are most important to First Nations,” he said. “We need the First Nations people to make those recommendations, but I believe all should be implemented through a consultative process.”

Morrison said he believes language, culture and environmental protection is at the heart of the Anishinabek people.

“The election has been called and we’ve been focused on so many issues across the social spectrum but I believe this is a crucial turning point in this country’s history,” he said.

The federal election is on Oct. 19.

Direct Link: <http://www.saultstar.com/2015/10/02/local-election-issues---native-affairs>

Indigenous-led group asks federal leaders to make reconciliation an election priority

Reconciliation Canada says it has received responses from 4 federal parties, but not Conservatives

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 02, 2015 4:30 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 4:30 PM ET



Conservative Leader Stephen Harper, left to right, Terry Audla, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde listen during the closing ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on June 3. (Sean Kilpatrick/Canadian Press)

An indigenous-led organization has sent letters to each of the federal party leaders, asking what they'll do to move forward on reconciliation between Aboriginal Peoples and all Canadians.

"We really believe that reconciliation must be one of the key issues leading up to this federal election," says Karen Joseph, chief executive officer of Reconciliation Canada, a Vancouver-based organization that aims to uphold the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

All but the federal Conservatives have responded, Joseph says.



'Reconciliation must be one of key issues' in election, says Karen Joseph, chief executive officer of Reconciliation Canada. (Reconciliation Canada)

"It's disappointing for us," she says. "But should they [Conservatives] provide a response for us, we'll openly support that."

In the letters, Reconciliation Canada posed three questions to leaders of the Bloc Québécois, Conservatives, Greens, Liberals and NDP:

- What steps will your party take to create a deeper understanding of the current realities of the residential school legacy for all Canadians?
- What steps will your party take to move forward with reconciliation among Aboriginal Peoples and all Canadians?
- What steps will your party take to achieve economic parity between Aboriginal Peoples and all Canadians?

Four federal leaders responded by the group's deadline of Sept. 28.

Some of those commitments include the Bloc Québécois vowing to make the federal government recognize the residential school system as cultural genocide; a Liberal pledge to make the history of the schools part of curricula across the country; the Green Party's intention to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the NDP promise to increase funding for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

"All of the parties that responded showed a willingness to support reconciliation, and it's good to see that every one of them have made commitments to moving reconciliation forward," Joseph says.

It's been four months since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released a summary of its findings, after six years of public hearings about the abuses that happened in the residential school system. It included 94 recommendations for change in policies, programs and the "way we talk to, and about, each other."

"Reconciliation is talking about what kind of future we want to create for Canada," Joseph says. "That's relevant regardless of any party, and it's the responsibility of all Canadians to have that conversation."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/reconciliation-election-priority-reconciliation-canada-1.3254369>

Canada's aboriginals a growing force in federal politics

[Christopher Curtis, Montreal Gazette](#)

Published on: October 2, 2015 | Last Updated: October 4, 2015 7:07 AM EDT



Drummers pass Parliament Hill as they lead the Walk for Reconciliation, part of the closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on May 31, 2015, in Ottawa. Justin Tang / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Paul Martin had just rattled off an impassioned, combative speech before the Assembly of First Nations in July, and the audience members quickly rose to their feet.

The former prime minister hammered the Conservative government's funding caps on aboriginal education, calling the trend "contrary to every value Canada stands for." Martin's fiery keynote speech closed the AFN's annual general assembly — a three-day meeting that centred on a campaign to get indigenous people voting in this year's federal election.

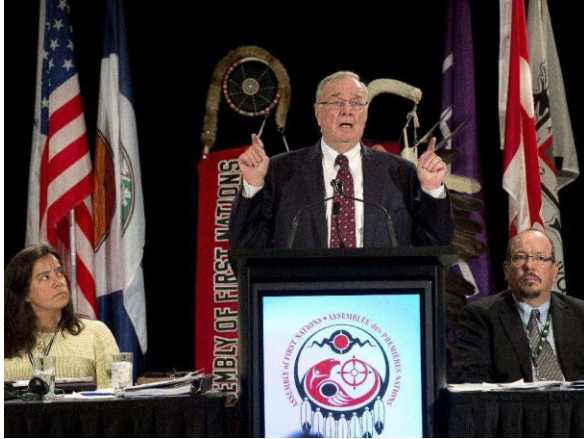
It struck a chord with many of the national chiefs, who showered him with applause as he walked off the stage at Montreal's Place Bonaventure.

But there was at least one holdout in the crowd who refused to stand and cheer Martin: Joe Norton.

It didn't matter that Norton, the long-serving Kahnawake Mohawk chief, was an old friend of Martin, or that he agreed with the substance of his speech. Nor did it matter that the two leaders would embrace moments later, playfully slapping each other's arms in the middle of a packed ballroom.

Joe Norton will not stand at attention for the former prime minister of Canada.

"(Martin) is a longtime friend of mine, we go way back and I have a lot of respect for him and what he's trying to do for First Nations," Norton told the Montreal Gazette. "But he's someone who represents something I cannot, in good conscience, participate in."



Former prime minister Paul Martin addresses the Assembly of First Nations congress in July. Ryan Remiorz / THE CANADIAN PRESS

This is Norton's quiet act of protest against a government he says encroaches on indigenous sovereignty. It is Norton's way of declaring that the people of Kahnawake are not subject to the Crown. The gesture speaks to the basic political reality of the Mohawk Nation: even in an election campaign that could drastically alter the relationship between Canada and its First Peoples, the Mohawks say they will not vote.

Though the Mohawks are bound to the Two Row Wampum — a centuries old treaty that affirms their nationhood and forbids them from participating in outside politics — they are hardly the only indigenous people who elect not to vote. Only 44 per cent of eligible voters on reserves across the country cast their ballots in the 2011 federal election. Meanwhile about 61 per cent of non-indigenous Canadians voted that year, according to Elections Canada.

But that could change.

Indigenous people are the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population, and community leaders believe that young, increasingly urban and politicized aboriginals will have their voices heard in Ottawa this year.

This summer, the AFN launched a campaign targeting 51 key ridings in which aboriginal ballots could swing the national vote against the ruling Conservative Party.

A powerful voice in 51 ridings

After relations between the federal Conservatives and the Assembly of First Nations broke down last year, the lobby group launched a campaign targeting 51 key ridings in which the voices of aboriginal voters could help bring about a change in government. The AFN is just one of the organizations urging Canada's First Nations to participate in the Oct. 19 federal election.

The last meaningful attempt at cooperation between the aboriginal lobby group and Tories ended in 2014 with a proposed \$1.9-billion education bill to fund on-reserve schooling. A few months after AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo and Prime Minister Stephen Harper struck the deal, it fell apart amid claims that First Nations consultation over the bill was limited and that funding fell way short of what's needed to give indigenous students the resources that the rest of Canadian children have. Atleo ultimately stepped down amid calls, from within the AFN, for him to resign over his handling of the file.

Now, National Chief Perry Bellegarde — Atleo's replacement — says he'll do something he's never done before: vote in a federal election. Bellegarde is urging all First Nations peoples to do the same.

For non-indigenous Canadians, October will mark the nation's 42nd federal election, but that isn't the case for aboriginals. Before 1960 — when Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's government granted First Nations unconditional franchise — the only way an indigenous person could vote in federal elections was by giving up their treaty rights.

This fall will only be the 18th federal election in which First Nations people have the right to vote — and many consider it the first election to substantively address issues that affect the 1.4 million indigenous Canadians.

There is another story that oddly mirrors the Paul Martin, Joe Norton anecdote.

This time, however, it was Justice Murray Sinclair standing at the lectern last June, presenting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report to a room full of white politicians in Ottawa. Sinclair, who headed the commission, spoke of the harrowing abuse related to him by the survivors of Canada's residential schools, but added that he remains hopeful that the country can heal its colonialist wounds.



Justice Murray Sinclair speaks at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in June. Adrian Wyld / THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Ojibway judge got his biggest ovation when he announced that the report calls for a public inquiry into the alarming frequency of missing and murdered aboriginal women. The crowd erupted in applause and Sinclair paused for a few moments to let the noise subside. There was, once again, at least one notable holdout: Bernard Valcourt, minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

Perhaps more than any other moment over the last decade, Valcourt's decision to sit in protest speaks to the increasingly dysfunctional relationship between the governing Conservatives and First Nations. The Tories will not heed Sinclair's call for an inquiry and won't implement many of the other 93 recommendations of the TRC's report.

The Harper government has repeatedly dismissed the idea that Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women represent a sociological phenomenon, and it has held firm on this point in the face of unrelenting criticism from First Nations. All of Canada's other major political parties, including the premiers of its 10 provinces, oppose the Conservatives on this front.

With each passing story of a young indigenous woman's body found along the side of a river or in a pile of garbage, calls for the inquiry have grown and this, to many aboriginals, is the issue drawing them into the national debate. An inquiry will certainly not bring back the 1,213 aboriginal women who were killed or went missing over the last 25 years, but advocates say it would humanize the victims and force Canadians to confront some of the endemic problems First Nations face.

"There's no doubt the need for an inquiry is one of the things that really pushed me to get involved," said Tanya Lalonde, who works with the Liberal Party's Aboriginal Peoples Commission, a political outreach group. "You hear about the way these women die and you want to know why it happens so often and you want it to stop. ... You want politicians to hear the families of these women, to listen to these families and take action."



Tanya Lalonde works for the Liberal Party's indigenous outreach branch in Quebec. John Mahoney / Montreal Gazette

Lalonde's experience speaks to a possible shift in Canadian politics. Before she became the head of the Quebec branch of the APC in 2013, the position had been vacant for about 20 years. One former Liberal adviser said that courting the aboriginal vote was seen, by politicians of every stripe, as something of a fool's errand given that they represent such a low percentage of the electorate (and one that doesn't tend to vote in large numbers). But things seems different now.

A lot of Lalonde's outreach work involves building bridges between her party and Montreal's growing aboriginal community.

"Before getting involved (with the Liberals), I did some thinking and I decided that there needed to be someone at the table bringing an indigenous perspective," said Lalonde. "A lot of the candidates care about the issues, but they don't necessarily know a lot about them. My job is to give them context."

Like about 60 per cent of Canada's indigenous population, Lalonde does not live on a reserve. The 34-year-old hails from a remote Métis settlement in Alberta, and came to Montreal to pursue a degree in social work at McGill University. Although the missing and murdered file is close to her heart, Lalonde's life story reveals a variety of issues that affect Canada's indigenous population.

Lalonde grew up poor, in a crowded house without running water, but she says there were happy moments in her childhood. She lived a sort of traditional life: her grandfather was a trapper, a hunter and fisherman and, in those days, Lalonde experienced a deep connection to the land and her culture.

"But I also saw what poverty does to people ... when I was a kid I was taken away, apprehended, and I spent the rest of my life in the child welfare system," Lalonde said. "I lived in a series of foster families, they were loving families but they weren't indigenous

families. So I lost that connection to who I was, and that's something a lot of children go through.

A lot of the research shows that the reason so many indigenous children are taken away isn't something like abuse — it's poverty that gets marked as neglect.

"I have a sister who is two years older than me who went through this with me. She got pregnant at a young age, she became addicted for a very long time. I was lucky, I got to reconnect to my culture when I was a teenager, I went to powwows and (sweat lodges) and met with elders and that saved me from going down another path."

Studies suggest there are more aboriginal children removed from their families today than there were at the height of Canada's residential school program. In the TRC's final report, Sinclair referred to the trend as a continuation of the assimilationist policies of Canada's past.

"A lot of the research shows that the reason so many indigenous children are taken away isn't something like abuse — it's poverty that gets marked as neglect," Lalonde said. "Families who don't have enough money to cover the basic necessities for their children, rather than get help from the system, they're punished by the system and their children are taken away."

Lalonde says her own experience shows that First Nations people can succeed inside the nation's political system instead of apart from it.

A few weeks ago, Wab Kinew waded across the Lake of the Woods shoreline in Northern Ontario, hand-picking wild rice from the brisk water.

Later this fall, he will head into the bush to hunt water fowl with his two sons. Like many other Anishnaabe, Kinew fasts in the summer, partakes in the sun dance and sweat lodges, he speaks Ojibway and observes the rituals that keep his culture alive.

Kinew has been a hereditary Ojibway chief since he was 22, in a political sphere that — at least on the surface — feels miles away from the pomp and ceremony of Westminster-style democracy.

But come Oct. 19, none of this will stop Kinew from casting his ballot.



Wab Kinew drums take part in a Walk for Reconciliation in Gatineau in May. Justin Tang / THE CANADIAN PRESS

“There’s an argument that you’re sacrificing some part of yourself, some part of your indigenous identity by participating in federal or municipal or provincial elections,” says Kinew, a journalist, author and the University of Manitoba’s director of indigenous inclusion. “But I disagree. I voted in every election since I turned 18. I voted in First Nations elections, civic elections, provincial elections and federal elections.

“And I noticed, along the way, I never spoke less Ojibway after I voted. I didn’t feel any of my treaty rights or aboriginal rights impacted after I voted. I didn’t feel as though the sovereignty of my community was, in any way, impeded. I don’t buy that argument. ... It’s like, yes, I’m status (Indian) but I also live in the city, my kids go to public school in Manitoba — so why wouldn’t I participate in the election?”

While there’s certainly a philosophical concern over elections and indigenous identity, one of the biggest roadblocks preventing aboriginals from getting to the polls is the actual voting process itself. It was once possible for aboriginals to vote using their Status Cards — a form of government-issued identification — but a federal bill passed in 2014 requires additional proof of identification and residence.

While critics of the government say this was a tactic aimed at disenfranchising indigenous voters, it may have had an opposite effect.

We’re seeing, in my region ... communities that are doing the work of showing what you need to do to vote. That’s certainly an unprecedented move, and we’re seeing that in ridings across the country.

“In my home community of Onigaming, you’re seeing voter registration drives where people are going to the band office, getting their proof of residency straightened out so they’ll be eligible to vote,” said Kinew. “I’ve seen get-out-the-vote campaigns before, but never with this kind of a grassroots feel to it.”

Meanwhile, groups like Indigenous Rock the Vote have held a series of monthly voter identification clinics in Winnipeg and online to ensure that young aboriginal people are

registered to vote in their ridings. The non-partisan group played a factor in Winnipeg's municipal election last year, when the city elected Métis Mayor Brian Bowman, and also saw Cree candidate Robert Falcon Ouellette place third with 16 per cent of the vote.

"In some of the isolated, fly-in communities in my riding, we've got people calling us and saying, 'How do I get the vote out in Fort Albany or Kashechewan? I've never done this, how do we do it?'" said Charlie Angus, the NDP candidate in Ontario's Timmins—James Bay riding. "We're seeing, in my region ... communities that are doing the work of showing what you need to do to vote. That's certainly an unprecedented move, and we're seeing that in ridings across the country."

Social media is also playing a role in the campaign, according to Angus and Kinew. As with the 2012 Idle no More protest movement, young aboriginal people are bypassing traditional media and connecting with each other directly through Facebook and Twitter.

Still, there are people who cannot reconcile their independence as First Nations with the act of voting for what they consider to be a foreign government occupying unceded indigenous territory.

The Two Row Wampum is an important reminder of this principle. The wampum belt treaty — which the Mohawks presented to Dutch settlers in the 17th century in what is now upstate New York — has two lines that run across it to symbolize both nations travelling side-by-side down the river of life.



The Two Row Wampum. Matthew Sherwood / Matthew Sherwood for National Post

"We don't step into their boat and they don't set foot in ours," said Norton. "We've always been allies, not subjects, of the colonialists. We fought alongside Canada, defended Canada against the United States in the War of 1812. And we're proud of our history."

"But the Two Row Wampum was meant to go on forever. That's why, when you look at a replica of it, you see strings on the end of it so you can keep adding to the belt as years go by. So we don't vote, not now, not ever."

The relationship between the Harper government and Canada's indigenous people hasn't always been fractured. The prime minister made the unprecedented gesture, in 2008, of apologizing on behalf of the government for its role in Canada's residential school system.

During a ceremony at the House of Commons, Harper offered a heartfelt, eloquent apology, admitting that for years, the government's goal had been to forcefully remove aboriginal children from their homes and "kill the Indian" inside them. Harper even delivered part of the speech in Ojibway, Cree and Inuktitut.

"You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey," he said, before an audience of survivors.



In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a well-received apology for more than a century of abuse and cultural loss involving residential schools. Tom Hanson / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Even Angus, who rarely passes up an opportunity to criticize the Tory leader, calls Harper's apology a high moment in Canadian Parliamentary history. But to Kinew — whose father was beaten and sexually abused during his years in residential school — the beauty of that apology did not translate into meaningful action.

Those who "who want to get on with the business of reconciliation," says Kinew, "have been disappointed that, while the apology was made by this government and a lot of the rhetoric is what people want to hear, the actual policy proposals and funding priorities are not there."

The Montreal Gazette's emails to the Conservative government seeking comment for this article were not returned.

Seven years after Harper vowed to accompany First Nations down the path of reconciliation, the gap between the quality of life on Canada's reserves and in its cities remains significant. On-reserve schools are underfunded, studies suggest [40 per cent of aboriginal children live in poverty](#) and a recently-released Senate report found that the housing crisis afflicting reserves may be worse than previously thought — it could take the immediate construction of up to 85,000 houses, [the report says](#), to accommodate Canada's surging aboriginal population.

And so there may also be a natural skepticism about what any political party could do to improve the lot of a young, energized population that doesn't have access to the same resources as their non-indigenous counterparts. Many First Nations people will be poor and feel alienated from the mainstream Canadian experience when the polls open on Oct. 19, and they'll still be poor and marginalized after a new government is elected on Oct. 20.

There is still hope at a better future, says Kinew, but it has to start at the voting booth — and it won't happen overnight.

"It's a long-term investment in building political capital for our communities," he says. "We want action on the issues that face indigenous people. Well, part of the way you get action from politicians is you vote in sufficient numbers that they realize you vote; and then you talk to them during their time in office and during the election campaigns. Over time, as politicians realize the indigenous people are a significant electoral force, they'll meet with us and make pitches to us based on what they think will earn our votes."

Direct Link: <http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/canadas-aboriginals-building-political-capital>

First Nations say their issues ignored so far in election campaign

Quebec aboriginal leaders call on federal leaders to address First Nations' issues in French-language debate

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 02, 2015 5:28 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 5:31 PM ET



(From left) Grand Chief of the Atikamekw Nation, Constant Awashish, AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard and Kahnawake Grand Chief Joseph Tokwiro Norton say they will hold a rally in Montreal on Oct. 9 to mobilize First Nations leaders just ahead of the election. (CBC)

First Nations leaders in Quebec say federal party leaders are overlooking major issues affecting their communities, and they want that to change, starting with tonight's French-language leadership debate.

The party leaders are facing off in Montreal Friday at 8 p.m. for their second televised French-language debate.

The last debate – broadcast on Radio-Canada one week ago – had tempers flaring on topics ranging from the Senate, national unity and the right to wear the niqab.

Mike McKenzie, chief of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam — an Innu community near Sept-Îles — said he is not impressed by anything he's heard.

"They talk about immigration and the niqab and ignore the problems facing the continents' first inhabitants" McKenzie said.

Kanesatake Grand Chief Serge Simon said he's also disappointed, but not surprised.

"They've been like this for so long, it's almost what we expect, and of course there's always a frustration, every election. This one's no different," Simon said.

First Nations leaders said they want the conversation during tonight's debate, and throughout the rest of the campaign, to include issues that affect First Nations communities such as improving access to schools, health care and living conditions, settling territorial disputes and strengthening the communities' partnership with Ottawa.

"The Crown and First Nations relationship is broken. It must be repaired and restored. The political parties have to acknowledge that, go beyond easy electoral promises and present a real plan. Our future is also the future of all Canadians," said Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador.

Rally next week

The First Nations leaders announced Friday that they will hold a rally followed by a march in Montreal next Friday, Oct. 9.

They hope to mobilize all First Nations communities across Canada.

The federal leaders of all political parties are invited to attend.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/first-nations-native-aboriginal-chiefs-federal-election-2015-french-language-debate-1.3255042>

Ashley Callingbull says First Nations rights 'slowly being taken from us'

Winner of beauty pageant urges indigenous students to vote, raise profile of First Nations issues in Canada

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 02, 2015 4:30 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 3:42 PM CT



Ashley Callingbull, who won the Mrs. Universe contest in August, spoke to indigenous students at the University of Manitoba Friday about the importance of voting in the federal election. (CBC)

Vote. That's the message Mrs. Universe had for indigenous students at the University of Manitoba Friday.

The beauty pageant winner whose name is Ashley Callingbull was the keynote speaker at a panel discussion about how indigenous vote can affect the federal election.

Callingbull said aboriginal issues need to come to the forefront of the election campaign.

"I feel like First Nations issues aren't being heard. They're not being dealt with. We are not a priority. You know, we're Canadian citizens as well," she said. "We're human

beings and we're not being treated as such. And I think it's time that we have a new government."

'Our rights are slowly being taken from us'

She said students need to start paying attention to what politicians hoping to be elected are saying.

"What parties are offering and what parties aren't offering because we got to focus on our rights. We never want to lose our rights and it feels like our rights are slowly being taken from us," she said. "And that's not right at all."

Callingbull, originally from Enoch Cree Nation in Alberta, was the first Canadian and the first First Nations person to win the international beauty contest in August.

She has added her voice to others calling for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and said First Nations have to make their voices heard.



Ashley Burnham, who won the "Mrs Universe 2015" contest in Minsk, Belarus, in August, is in Winnipeg Friday to inspire First Nations young people to vote in the federal election Oct. 19. (Vasily Fedosenko/Reuters)

"It's dangerous to be a First Nations woman in this country because we are not as important as other women in this country," she said Friday. "We're not considered a priority by our own government and what does the government say about us? It makes us feel like we're belittled on so many levels."

She said it's been a bit overwhelming since winning the Mrs. Universe title.

"It's crazy. I'm a pageant girl, actress and I do a lot of charity work so it's crazy to see that a girl winning a pageant getting this much exposure especially politically. It's really surprising and shocking," she said. But it's a role she is now embracing.

"People are actually looking up to me and they're actually reaching out to me. I'm actually making a difference and I have this huge influence on the vote now. So it's a

crazy thing but, you know, it's a very proud and humbling moment that I'm changing lives," she said with a laugh.



Ashley Callingbull of Alberta's Enoch Cree Nation was the first First Nations woman and the first Canadian to win the Mrs. Universe pageant. (Facebook)

The event to encourage aboriginal students to vote, has been organized by the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Federation of Students and is being held at the University of Manitoba's Migizii Agamik Indigenous Student Centre,

Callingbull was the keynote speaker.

Other speakers included the recently-elected Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak or MKO, the group representing Manitoba's northern chiefs, Sheila North Wilson.

Kevin Hart, Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations and Terry Nelson, Grand Chief of the Southern Chiefs' Organization, were also on the panel.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/ashley-callingbull-says-first-nations-rights-slowly-being-taken-from-us-1.3253292>

NDP leader Thomas Mulcair unveiling party's Indigenous issues platform Wednesday

[National News](#) | October 3, 2015 by [APTN National News](#)



(NDP leader Thomas Mulcair during a recent stop in Iqaluit. APTN/Photo)

APTN National News

OTTAWA—The NDP will be releasing its platform Wednesday on Indigenous issues within a “nation to nation framework.”

NDP candidate Niki Ashton said during a sparsely-attended press conference Saturday in Ottawa that NDP leader Thomas Mulcair would be making the announcement detailing how the party would invest \$2.3 billion in new money for Indigenous communities.

“This is new money, on top of money Aboriginal Affairs has allocated and allocates every year to First Nations,” said Ashton.

The NDP’s press conference was held to again target the Liberal party’s promised new dollars for First Nation education.

The NDP says an about \$1.7 billion gap exists between Liberal leader Justin Trudeau’s August announcement for First Nations education and the money earmarked for the issue in the party’s costing document. During the August announcement, Trudeau said the party would be putting \$2.6 billion in new money for First Nations education, but only \$900 million was set aside in the costing document.

Trudeau told *APTN National News* that his party’s education promise includes the about \$1.25 billion the previous Conservative government had pencilled into the fiscal framework that was tied to passage of the First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act, which died on the order paper.

NDP candidate Charlie Angus said it’s irresponsible for the Liberals to hinge a promise on money that “doesn’t exist” in publicly available government budget documents. Angus said the Stephen Harper government squeezed dollars from every budget corner to balance the budget and he doubts those dollars are still there.

“This is money that they will have to find,” said Angus. “The idea that the money is sitting under a desk isn’t simply credible...Mr. Trudeau needs to say where is that envelope of money he is counting on.”

The Liberals immediately fired back Saturday with a press release again stating their promise includes money the Conservative government set-aside.

The federal Finance department said in an emailed statement to *APTN* that the money does still exist.

“The funds remain in the fiscal framework. Following the federal election, the government will determine the best use of these funds,” said the statement.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt’s office also said the money is there. The government has already committed \$500 million from the initial \$1.9 billion for infrastructure along \$200 million for K to 12 education on First Nation communities, said Valcourt’s office.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/03/ndp-leader-thomas-mulcair-unveiling-partys-indigenous-issues-platform-wednesday/>

Canada election 2015: Who's running in the Yukon riding?

A look at the candidates running in Yukon in the federal election

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 04, 2015 8:00 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 05, 2015 5:33 AM CT

Melissa Atkinson



NDP candidate Melissa Atkinson. (Philippe Morin/CBC)

Melissa Atkinson is the NDP candidate in Yukon.

Atkinson is a lawyer and former chair of the Yukon Human Rights Commission. She's also a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

Atkinson said she chose to run because she wants change. She said Yukoners want an MP who will represent their voice in Ottawa.

She has cited a number of key issues and priorities, including the repeal of Bill C-51, and a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. Atkinson has also said she'll stand up for Yukon First Nations rights, supporting their stand against Bill S-6.

Larry Bagnell



Liberal candidate Larry Bagnell. (Philippe Morin/CBC)

Larry Bagnell is running for the Liberal Party in Yukon.

Bagnell was the territory's Liberal MP from 2000 until 2011, winning three elections before losing to Ryan Leef in 2011 by 132 votes. As MP, Bagnell served as Parliamentary Secretary to both the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the Minister of Natural Resources.

Bagnell has said a Liberal government would restore funding to Parks Canada, a department which has lost 30 jobs in Yukon since 2010. He has also spoken about restoring the relationship between government and First Nations, in part by enacting all recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Frank De Jong



Green candidate Frank De Jong. (de Jong campaign)

Frank De Jong is the Green Party candidate for Yukon.

De Jong was the first leader of Ontario's provincial Green Party, a position he held from 1993 to 2009. He now lives in Faro, where he is an elementary school teacher.

De Jong has said the economy is the big issue in this election, and touts the Green Party's plan to shift taxes "off of jobs, off of sales, off of businesses, and shift those taxes onto nature."

He believes Yukon is a very "Green-leaning" riding, and hopes to build on his party's showing in the last election, when Yukon Green candidate John Streicker came third, with 19 per cent of the vote.

Ryan Leef



Conservative candidate Ryan Leef. (Philippe Morin/CBC)

Ryan Leef is seeking re-election as Yukon's Conservative MP. He ran his first campaign in 2011, when he unseated Liberal MP Larry Bagnell by 132 votes, or one percentage point.

Leef grew up in Dawson City and has often referred to his "diversified career in law enforcement," which included work as a police officer.

Leef has said the economy and terrorism are key issues in this election. His party has promised to establish a military reserve unit in Yukon if re-elected, as well as a new training facility for cadets in Whitehorse, and more money for CanNor.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-election-2015-who-s-running-in-the-yukon-riding-1.3249408>

Organizer who helped get Obama elected, hopes to rock the Indigenous vote in Canada

[National News](#) | October 6, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#)



(Cara Currie Hall on the Enoch Cree First Nation in Alberta. Currie Hall is Canada hoping to get Indigenous people to vote. (Photo: Brandi Morin/APTN))

Brandi Morin

APTN National News

One of the founders of the Rock the Indigenous Vote movement in the United States is calling on Aboriginal people in Canada to get out to the polls.

Cara Currie Hall said it's time for Indigenous People to make their voices heard, loud and clear.

“Together I think we can make a thunder sound across the country,” said Currie Hall. “We can hear the drum beats- hear them, listen for them because we are rising up!”

Currie Hall was born and raised in Maskwacis, Alta on the Montana First Nation and comes from a long line of political influence.

Her mother’s father was a tribal leader in his community.

Her father Cecile Currie Senior was the Chief of Montana First Nation in the 1960s as was his father before him.

Currie Hall said her father was one of the initiators of the creation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and worked closely with Wilton Littlechild who helped write and develop it.

“My dad initiated this kind of work on defending your Treaty rights. This (voting) is also part of defending your treaty rights.

The government is trying to oppress us and do away with those rights, we need another 1960s push back like what happened with the White paper.”

For the past 16 years, Currie Hall has lived in North Dakota on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. Her husband is a Tribal leader on council there.

During President Barack Obama’s first presidential campaign in 2007, Currie Hall helped to organize Native Americans into a block vote for him. Currie Hall said that led to a Native American woman on President Obama’s senior staff and a Native American lawyer appointed as a US ambassador.



Currie Hall’s daughter Faith, in pink, shakes President Barack Obama’s hand during his visit to Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in 2014. (Photo courtesy of Cara Currie Hall)

“We have a president in the United states that recognized that we could bring a unique block to him and Native Americans came out 4 to 1 behind him.”

She said Indigenous voters are a force to be reckoned with.

“When we won, Obama stayed true to his promises. We had direct access and dialogue with the president,” she said. “He now holds an annual dialogue summit with Tribal leaders and they meet on a nation to nation basis.”

Currie Hall said Rock the Indigenous Vote is a grassroots movement by the people and for the people. It started with a small group of people networking, word spread from there, and it paid off.

Currie Hall feels confident that a similar impact could be made in Canada in the upcoming election.



Currie Hall with daughter Faith and friends at President Barack Obama's visit to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in 2014. (Photo courtesy of Cara Currie Hall)

She came back home to Canada last week to help push the Indigenous vote here.

“In Canada we're not counted on to be part of the statistics. Together First Nations, Metis and Inuit make up several million, so that's a block vote. There's at least 50 candidates that are Indigenous running for office,” she explained.

“Here's what we can do – one: we get the word out that we need to vote, two: we actually do vote. Then we switch the statistics around,” she said. “Then we become the block who never got included in any of those polls or stats. Then we elect 50 people to parliament. We could get 50 people in there. That's actually doable in 14 days from now!”

Currie Hall said one of her main motivations to Rock the Indigenous Vote is so that Indigenous voices will be heard and represented nationwide.

“This has been our entire history, that we have not been supported. They've (Canadian government) tried every possible way to assimilate us and to terminate us, they and most governments around the world do that,” she said. “But the Canadian government is doing that today.”

The federal government has endorsed the UNDRIP and maintains that it is simply an aspirational document but not legally binding in Canada.

“For one, implementing free, prior and informed consent. Which means no plans to develop go ahead without receiving the free prior and informed consent of the Indigenous people, because they own the minerals and the land,” she said. “Which means nothing happens without their full consent.”

She also said Indigenous People need to invoke the inclusion of Creator God and call on Him for direction in the election process.

“We are a people that are spiritual, we do pray and we acknowledge there is one creator. God is the supreme Sovereign. Our people understood sovereign – when we put it in that context- there’s someone higher than us and we need that help,” she said. “The impact of what we do today is going to ripple into the next generations following us.”

This week Currie Hall will be speaking with Chiefs from across Canada as they gather in Enoch, Alta., for the Assembly of First Nations open forum discussion on the federal election this Wednesday.



(L to R) Cara Currie Hall, Confederacy of Treaty 6 Grand Chief Tony Alexis, Nicole Robertson and Sharon Seright supporting Rock the Indigenous Vote at the flashmob round dance last Thursday in Edmonton. (Photo: Brandi Morin/APTN)

Alberta AFN Regional Chief Craig Mackinaw said he supports Rock the Indigenous Vote and plans to vote on October 19.

“The government really hasn’t been listening to us, so that’s part of the reason why I’m going to vote,” said Mackinaw.

He agreed with Currie Hall that the Indigenous vote could have an impact on a federal level.

“When you look at what happened in Alberta (with the last provincial election), when people do decide to vote it does make a difference.”

For those who are on the fence about voting, Currie Hall said that Treaty’s are intertwined with Canada’s constitution and voting doesn’t make a nation less sovereign.

“Citizenship was given to us upon the signing of Treaty. So we are dual citizens. We’re sovereign people, we’re treaty peoples, but we’re also Canadian citizens. So really they should see it as an opportunity to change this government that we are engaged with,” she said.

Currie Hall is working with a team of people across Canada to get the message of Rock the Indigenous Vote out.

Last week in Edmonton a flash mob style round dance was held, there are social media and other grassroots initiatives in the works, but ultimately it’s about getting people to the polls.



Currie Hall on the Enoch Cree First Nation in Alberta. Photo: Brandi Morin/APTN

“Be strategic. Our ancestors were warriors, and we need to be that same type of person today. We’re not willing to compromise. This is an incredible opportunity for us to change the way the world functions for us,” said Currie Hall. “And we’re not rising up in a confrontational way, we’re taking back what is already ours. We’re taking back our place in society and the ownership of the land and the way this government is run.”

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/06/organizer-who-helped-get-obama-elected-hopes-to-rock-the-indigenous-vote-in-canada/>

Rock The Vote targets indigenous voters at Portage Place

'I never thought about it,' aboriginal voter said before meeting volunteers

By Chris Glover, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 06, 2015 2:09 PM CT Last Updated: Oct 06, 2015 9:11 PM CT



Some aboriginal people are taking another look at the federal election after an indigenous group trying to get people to the polls was at Portage Place Mall in downtown Winnipeg Tuesday.

Winnipeg Indigenous Rock The Vote (WIRTV) said many aboriginal voters don't think they have the proper identification.

Voters either need a driver's licence or two things that show your address and your name, according to Elections Canada.

"It could be some really uncommon things like you could have your debit card and your apartment lease or your debit card and your Manitoba hydro bill," said Lisa Forbes a volunteer with WIRTV.



Wayne Mason, 61, volunteer with indigenous 'Rock The Vote' group wants other aboriginal people to get to the polls. (Chris Glover/CBC)

"So, think two items, that show your name and address. Don't think two ID, cause that'll throw you off," Forbes said.

Even people with no fixed address can vote; such as homeless people, people living on reserve, students in residence, or people who live in long term care homes. There's a new form this year these groups can get signed that counts as one part of the two part identification process.

Forbes said one thing that doesn't count as ID, is the voter identification card voters get in the mail.

"Even though it shows your name and address - you can't use it," she said.

'I just never thought about it,' voter says

The biggest barrier WIRTV encounters with aboriginal voters is disengagement and apathy.

Aboriginal voter Megan Sumner, 23, has never even thought of voting before Tuesday because she didn't think it mattered.

"No one has ever told me to vote, but I think what she's saying is good," Sumner said.



WIRTV displayed a full list of what counts towards identification that was provided by Elections Canada. The list includes: old pill bottles and government cheques. (Chris Glover/CBC)

After being stopped by WIRTV volunteers, the adult education student said she has changed her mind.

"I think I would vote, I mean she brought a lot of good points. If it really makes a difference, people should vote," she said.

Now that Sumner has committed to voting, the 23-year-old Lake St. Martin voter has some homework to do before the Oct. 19 vote.

"I don't know too much about it right now, but I could always learn about it."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/rock-the-vote-targets-indigenous-voters-at-portage-place-1.3259199>

Justin Trudeau vows to end First Nations reserve boil-water advisories within 5 years

'This has gone on for far too long,' Liberal leader says

The Canadian Press Posted: Oct 05, 2015 8:59 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 05, 2015 9:52 PM ET



Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau participates in a Vice town hall Monday in Toronto. (Paul Chiasson/Canadian Press)

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau promised Monday to end boil-water advisories on First Nations reserves within five years.

"We have 93 different communities under 133 different boil-water advisories," Trudeau told a town hall hosted by Vice magazine.

"A Canadian government led by me will address this as a top priority because it's not right in a country like Canada. This has gone on for far too long."

Earlier in the day, Trudeau released his [full package of campaign promises](#), an 88-page plan that includes billions pledged for infrastructure projects, including investments in water facilities, as well as a commitment to First Nations education of \$750 million per year over the next four years.

Trudeau's promise came on the same day as the Neskantaga First Nation, which has the longest-standing boil-water advisory in the country of more than 20 years, [made an appeal for the next prime minister to intervene personally to address the issue.](#)

More than 300 people in the northern Ontario reserve have been forced to live under a boil-water advisory since 1995.

"We are calling on the government to be aware of this. We need action. We need resolution as to how [and] why this is continuing today in our community," Chief Wayne Moonias said Monday.

Earlier this year, CBC News learned [the federal government has spent more than \\$1 million on bottled water for the community.](#)

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-justin-trudeau-first-nations-boil-water-advisories-1.3258058>

Panel on First Nations issues transcends formal party lines

ANDREA GUNN OTTAWA BUREAU

Published October 5, 2015 - 9:28pm

Last Updated October 5, 2015 - 9:39pm



Cumberland-Colchester NDP candidate Wendy Robinson said she felt it was important for her, as the riding's sole female candidate, to attend in support of First Nations women in the area.

It's not very often you will see political opponents participating in the same campaign event.

But that's exactly what happened in Cumberland-Colchester on Monday when the riding's NDP and Green candidates came to a roundtable discussion facilitated by Liberal candidate Bill Casey and former party leader and Ontario premier Bob Rae.

Members of the Millbrook First Nation community, regional councillors and members of the general public joined the federal candidates, Rae, MLA and provincial NDP

aboriginal affairs critic Lenore Zann, and Senate opposition leader James Cowan at the Glooscap Heritage Centre on Monday afternoon for an open discussion on issues facing the region's First Nations communities.

A impassioned discussion between participants on poverty, violence against women, racism, education and the possible solutions for these far-reaching problems ensued.

No longer a politician, Rae brought to the table his expertise as a lawyer specializing in representing aboriginal communities.

Cumberland-Colchester NDP candidate Wendy Robinson said she felt it was important for her, as the riding's sole female candidate, to attend in support of First Nations women in the area, and to hear about the issues affecting the community.

"We're all on the same side when it comes to aboriginal issues," Robinson said.

Green candidate Jason Blanch said, for him, Monday's event was more important than politics.

"I think it's important to show, on this issue at least, all of the parties other than the governing party are standing in solidarity with First Nations people."

Casey said the roundtable was a learning experience for him.

"If I can learn so much in an hour and a half as I have here ... it convinces me even more of the need of an inquiry (into murdered and missing aboriginal women)," he said.

Rae said the issues affecting First Nations communities across the country are something Canadians of all political stripes should be concerned about, especially when talking about the measures outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

"You can't take the politics out of it completely, because different parties have different platforms, but I do think it's important that the issue of reconciliation goes well beyond partisanship."

Conservative candidate Scott Armstrong did not attend the meeting.

After the roundtable, Rae attended a more partisan fundraising event with Casey, and then headed to Halifax, where he attended a \$100-a-plate fundraising dinner in Halifax with candidate Andy Fillmore.

Direct Link: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/federal-election-2015/1315139-panel-on-first-nations-issues-transcends-formal-party-lines>

Members of B.C.'s First Nations urged to register and vote

Assembly's national chief travelling Canada to highlight issues

By Susan Lazaruk, The Province October 5, 2015

If all the natives living in 11 of B.C.'s federal electoral ridings voted en masse for one party in the Oct. 19 federal election, they would have enough clout to swing the vote to that party, according to the [Assembly of First Nations](#).

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde, who recently announced he would vote in the federal election, reversing an earlier pledge not to, urged all members of Canada's 634 First Nation bands, nearly a third of which are in B.C., to register and vote.

Across Canada there are 51 "swing ridings," those identified as having enough of an aboriginal population to potentially influence the election, based on returns from the 2011 general election, said the AFN.

The 11 in B.C. include Surrey Centre and Surrey Newton, as well as Mission-Matsqui-Fraser Canyon, and eight others, including those in areas of Nanaimo, Sooke, Courtenay and Cowichan on Vancouver Island and Powell River, South Okanagan, Prince George and Skeena.

Four of those are existing ridings, two held by Conservatives, two by the NDP; and eight are newly created ridings.

Bellegarde urges natives to vote but won't directly suggest for whom "because I have to work with whoever's elected."

But he is travelling across Canada to draw attention to the AFN's priorities.

"This election on Oct. 19 is an opportunity to get our issues known and our concerns heard," he told an editorial board meeting at The Province on Monday.

Canada as a whole ranks sixth on the UN Human Development Index, while First Nations are 63rd, said Bellegarde, noting there's a "high social cost" for not closing the gap.

AFN priorities include funding for education, child welfare, health, transportation and resources to strengthen families and communities; sharing revenue resources and lifting a two-per-cent funding cap.

"We weren't meant to be poor in our own homeland," said Bellegarde.

The AFN is also calling for the next federal government to uphold native rights won in Supreme Court of Canada decisions; respect the environment in balance with sustainable development; revitalize the 58-plus indigenous languages; and implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which heard from survivors of Canada's residential school system.

"The residential schools really killed our people," he said, adding the dysfunction in native communities can be traced back to the colonization and oppression of those schools at which children were forced to speak English and subjected to mental, physical and sexual abuse, in addition to being exposed to diseases and sickness.

The AFN is also calling on the next federal government to hold an inquiry into 1,200 missing native women. said Bellegarde.

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/life/members+first+nations+urged+register+vote/11416206/story.html>

Election 2015: Candidates debate First Nations issues



Green Party candidate Paul Manly, left, Conservative candidate Mark MacDonald, NDP candidate Sheila Malcolmson and Liberal candidate Tim Tessier debate aboriginal issues Monday at an all-candidates' meeting at the Nanaimo Association for Community Living building downtown.

by [Greg Sakaki - Nanaimo News Bulletin](#)

posted Oct 5, 2015 at 11:00 PM— updated Oct 6, 2015 at 10:54 AM

There was spirited debate, some disagreement and even a Justin Bieber reference. For the first time in Nanaimo, local federal election candidates got together at the same table for an all-candidates' meeting.

The Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre and the Mid-Island Métis Nation Association hosted the candidates from the four main parties Monday evening at the Nanaimo Association for Community Living building downtown. The theme of the meeting was aboriginal issues,

and there was plenty of discussion around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report.

"I believe that reconciliation is not an aboriginal issue, it is a Canadian issue and it goes back for too many generations..." said Tim Tessier, Liberal candidate. "I affirm our unwavering support for all of the TRC's recommendations."

Sheila Malcolmson, NDP candidate, said she heard brave commission testimony in Vancouver and said "the reconciliation process is the imperative of Canada's time ... The New Democrat commitment is to implement in consultation with the indigenous leadership – so you tell us what's most important."

There are immediate actions that an NDP government could take, though, she added, such as calling an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, creating a national centre on truth and reconciliation, and signing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"It's an international embarrassment we haven't done it already," Malcolmson said.

Paul Manly, Green Party candidate, said he attended truth and reconciliation hearings in Duncan. A federal government can't move on all 94 recommendations, he said.

"But we have jurisdiction over key areas – making sure that the child welfare system is fixed in this country. It is abysmal," he said.

He mentioned equal opportunities within the education system are important, as well as bringing back and encouraging First Nations languages and cultures.

Mark MacDonald, Conservative candidate, pointed out that it was the current government that acted to create the commission.

"Prime Minister Harper was the very first prime minister to stand up publicly and apologize to First Nations people..." he said. "These are horrific stories that have gone on in residential schools, heart-wrenching, and there needs to be a time of healing and that will come. It starts when the conversation gets out."

The candidates also talked about equality in education for First Nations and non-First Nations. Manly mentioned the Green Party's promise to abolish post-secondary tuition fees.

"We are going to start with those who are most in need – people who live in poverty, people with disabilities, First Nations, other people that are marginalized in society who want an advanced education," he said. "I know I'm going to be [asked], 'How are you going to pay for this?' We are going to charge a proper royalty rate for the resources that are extracted on the traditional territory of the people of this country."

MacDonald was next to speak, replying, "It's always interesting to listen to fantasy financing."

Another noteworthy exchange came during a discussion of a Supreme Court of Canada case on the rights of Métis and non-status aboriginal people.

"I think the prime minister ... looks at issues and he examines them before making a decision," said MacDonald. "He's not like Justin Bieber, I mean, sorry, Trudeau, with making rash comments about 'we're going to do this, we're going to do that.'"

The joke drew boos from those in attendance.

"There has been a tactic that's been going on, and shame on us as a country. It's called bullying," said Tessier. "And I heard it tonight."

For the final question of the night, the candidates were asked their personal experiences working on First Nations issues.

"Because of the rules of engagement that our hosts asked us to [adhere to] tonight, I am refraining from making any comments about the record of my colleague to the right," said Malcolmson, referring to MacDonald. "But I'd love to talk with you about it afterwards."

An all-candidates' meeting on social justice issues is scheduled for Tuesday (Oct. 6) at 7 p.m. at the Beban Park Social Centre. That meeting is co-hosted by the local chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women and the First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo.

Direct Link: <http://www.nanaimobulletin.com/news/330807881.html>

Aboriginal Friendship Society helping people vote

Special polling station open today until Thursday

Posted On: Monday, October 5th, 2015 | 5:10pm PDT

Story by: Chad Klassen

It's two week exactly until federal election night across the country, And while many voters will cast their ballot on October 19, others are eager to vote in advance. Now, Elections Canada has launched a pilot project to open additional polling stations, including at the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, as a means to encourage more people to get out and exercise their right to vote.

Voting in this federal election is not easy for people like David Buchanan who doesn't have any identification.

"I have my tax return cheque and I have to get the stub off it, so I'm still in the process of getting registered," says Buchanan.

But Buchanan lives close to the Kamloops Friendship Society, an organization that's helping to make voting a possibility for him.

"Make me feel good, it makes me feel like I'm not a nobody. Somebody recognizes me and knows who I am, and knows I'm a Canadian and I need to vote. It's good to vote," he says.

The Friendship Society knows David and others in the neighbourhood that are eligible to vote, but don't have ID.

"They come in and get this sheet, and their name goes up here, they sign it down here, and it states that they receive regular services at Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society," says Friendship Society manager Barry James.

This is the second time the Friendship Society has provided this service, first during the 2011 federal election. But this time, there is an Elections Canada polling station right next door.

The special polling station is open from today until Thursday. It's part of a pilot project, set up by Elections Canada to help make it easier for the homeless, First Nations, and really anyone in that North Shore neighbourhood to cast a ballot this year.

"Any place that removes barriers for people is what we're interested in doing," says Elections Canada returning officer Nancy Plett. "The Aboriginal Friendship Society has been fantastic in allowing us to use the office space attached to their building. We have community relation officers that are out talking to people, people that typically don't vote on Election Day or have barriers to voting."

Breaking down barriers makes all the difference for David, who now gets to exercise his democratic right.

"Oh wow, I really appreciate having this elections office right here because I just live down the street and it really helps," says Buchanan. "It makes me feel like voting more, knowing that it's right there. I don't feel so intimidated. I don't have to go to a special place. That's a lot less stress for me."

Direct Link: <http://www.cfjctv.com/story.php?id=24376>

Qikiqtani Inuit Association to talk mining, codeshare at meeting

President PJ Akeeagok says QIA will look to Inuit this week as it plans for the future



PJ Akeeagok, the president of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, says he hopes Inuit beneficiaries come out in force to this week's general meeting, because it's up to them to set his mandate. (CBC)

President PJ Akeeagok says the Qikiqtani Inuit Association wants to connect with beneficiaries this week, as it provides its yearly update and plans for the future.

From today until Thursday, the regional organization will hold its annual general meeting at Iqaluit's Frobisher Inn.

"The QIA belongs to Inuit. They deserve to know what the organization's been up to," he said, adding that he's "really, truly excited" to be tabling the first annual report from QIA in roughly a decade.

Akeeagok, who was [elected president last December](#), has emphasized the importance of accountability and engaging beneficiaries in the decision-making process.

"You always have to look back to know where you're going."

Over the course of the week, Akeeagok says QIA will update beneficiaries on a number of key projects, as well as celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Controversial shipping proposal

Earlier this year, the [Qikiqtani Inuit Association teamed up with Nunavut Tunngavik, Inc.](#) to oppose a bid by Baffinland Iron Mines to bypass a Nunavut Planning Commission decision about the mining company's 10-month shipping proposal.

At the time, QIA said granting that exemption would go against the spirit and intent of the land claim.

Despite that protest, [Baffinland was granted the exemption](#) and is now taking its case straight to the Nunavut Impact Review Board.

"We have some information in terms of what they're planning to do so the next step is to prepare for the NIRB process," said Akeeagok.

But he says QIA has not made any final decisions.

"There's a path forward that we all have to go by, but at the end of the day it's Inuit that we're going to go to in terms of how they want us to proceed."

'You have to apply'

Akeeagok says QIA will also discuss the Ilagiiktunut Fund, which was officially launched last year as part of the Mary River Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement.

"I think the communities really acknowledge and take advantage of it," said Akeeagok.

But he encourages more Inuit to submit funding proposals.

"You have to apply to get funding to run programs, so I truly wish to have more people apply for that amazing program."

Codeshare troubles

The regional organization will also weigh in on one of Nunavut's most-talked-about issues of the summer, the new codesharing agreement between First Air and Canadian North.

People in many Northern communities have complained about the arrangement, saying it has led to fewer and more expensive flights.

Representatives of both airlines are set to respond to those concerns at a public meeting on Thursday afternoon, beginning at 2:30 p.m.

Music, feast celebrate anniversary

Finally, Akeeagok says the 40th anniversary of the QIA is something "very special" and the Inuit organization is planning to mark it in several ways.

On Saturday, QIA kicked off its celebrations with a screening of *Tunniit: Retracing the Lines of Inuit Tattoos*.

Tuesday night, there will be a feast with several musical guests beginning at 6 p.m. at Inuksuk High School.

Then on Oct. 16, community directors in hamlets across the region will host open houses to acknowledge the land selectors who helped shape the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/qikiqtani-inuit-association-to-talk-mining-codeshare-at-meeting-1.3258903>

Drinking water a concern at Curve Lake First Nation's all-candidates debate

By [Joelle Kovach](#)

Wednesday, October 7, 2015 7:12:40 EDT AM



Peterborough-Kawartha federal riding candidates, from left, Conservative Michael Skinner, Green Doug Mason, Liberal Maryam Monsef, New Democrat Dave Nickle and Strength in Democracy candidate Toban Leckie debate Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2015 at the Curve Lake Community Centre. Joelle Kovach/Peterborough Examiner/Postmedia Network

CURVE LAKE - The lack of clean drinking water at Curve Lake First Nation was one of the topics covered at an all-candidates debate on the reserve Tuesday night.

Boil-water advisories are issued every week in Curve Lake, says Chief Phyllis Williams, for lack of a water treatment facility to serve the entire reserve.

Sometimes there are daily boil-water advisories, Williams said, and it's been this way for a decade.

The candidates were asked what they'd do about it, if elected.

Other questions were covered too, in the three-hour debate, such as missing and murdered aboriginal women and mental health care for First Nations.

But for the 80 people gathered at the Curve Lake Community Centre, clean drinking water is a basic daily need - and they wanted to know how their future MP would help them.

Peterborough-Kawartha Green party candidate Doug Mason said he hadn't even been aware of the lack of clean drinking water at Curve Lake until recently.

"I don't know how I've been so blind to this," he said, adding that the Greens have committed money to building environmentally-friendly infrastructure - and surely water treatment facilities for First Nations would qualify.

Conservative candidate Michael Skinner said the federal government has \$185 million set aside for First Nations projects such as this one.

If elected, he said it would be up to him to ensure Curve Lake gets its fair share of that money.

But Strength in Democracy candidate Toban Leckie questioned whether \$185 million would be enough to deliver clean water to reserves across Canada.

He called it "institutional racism" to not help First Nations access clean drinking water.

"Would thus be happening in someplace like Lindsay?" he asked the crowd, using that community as a random example. "No - it wouldn't."

Liberal candidate Maryam Monsef said she's been aware of the problem, and that when she tells people they can hardly believe safe drinking water is scarce in a community just 20 minutes from Lakefield.

She said people's health is at risk, and that Curve Lake can't build manufacturing plants for lack of water.

Monsef said she's glad to run for a party with the "compassion" to commit to getting clean water to Canada's 130 First Nations.

NDP candidate Dave Nickle said that if boil-water advisories were issued for a place such as East City, for instance, it would be fixed immediately.

He was appalled that Curve Lake waits a decade, and that anyone would trust either he Liberals or the Conservatives to do anything about it.

Both parties have cut funding to First Nations in the past, he pointed out.

"I don't trust Mr. Harper or Mr. Trudeau," he said. "I trust Tom (Mulcair) that we will make the progress on a nation-to-nation basis."

The next all-candidates debate will be taped live at Cogeco on Wednesday from 7 to 9 p.m.

BOIL-WATER ADVISORIES FREQUENT AT CURVE LAKE FIRST NATION

CURVE LAKE -- Boil-water advisories happen all the time at Curve Lake First Nation.

Chief Phyllis Williams says they happen every week, if not every day.

They're not always widespread, she said: different subdivisions may be affected at any given time, while other areas on reserve have safe water.

It's been this way for a decade, all because Curve Lake doesn't have a water treatment facility to serve the entire reserve.

Such a facility would cost about \$25 million, and Williams said they couldn't pay for it without federal funds.

They could raise money for a design - Williams said that would cost about \$1 million. But they'd need to work with the federal government to ensure they've met Ottawa's standards for water treatment plants.

Williams said there is one small facility on the reserve; it serves a subdivision of about 60 houses.

Meanwhile there are roughly 350 houses at Curve Lake. Most get water from wells or septic systems.

That can be fine, except that Williams says their location on a peninsula means regular episodes of poor water quality.

It's a health issue for people, and Williams also points out that it limits the businesses that can locate on reserve.

She also said residents cannot take safe drinking water for granted - even though it's a necessity of life.

It's critical to get the situation rectified, she said.

"It's a safety thing for us."

Direct Link: <http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/2015/10/07/drinking-water-a-concern-at-curve-lake-first-nations-all-candidates-debate>

Mulcair promises NDP will usher a 'new era' in Aboriginal relations

“There are more than 50 ridings across the country where First Nations, Inuit and Metis people can have a determining effect on the result,” Mulcair said.



NDP leader Tom Mulcair speaks near Edmonton.

By: [Ryan Tumilty](#) Metro Published on Tue Oct 06 2015

In a stopoff near Edmonton Wednesday, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair promised he would create a “new era” in the relationship between Aboriginal communities and Canada if he were elected.

Mulcair promised \$1.8 billion in additional investments in Aboriginal communities, including money for improved health care and infrastructure to ensure people do not have to live through unending boil-water advisories, as part of his message.

“We have been clear about what we are going to do differently,” he said. “I believe it is time for a new era built on a true nation-to-nation relationship.”

Mulcair spoke at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) open election forum, part of an effort by the AFN to increase Aboriginal participation in the coming campaign.

He said fixing the relationship was essential to Canada’s economy, but it was also past time Aboriginal Canadians were given the same opportunities as other Canadians.

“When you are in Iqaluit [Nunavut] and you know there is an 11-year-old boy who took his own life because he believed there was no hope, than it is your job to give hope and that’s what this is about.”

He also emphasized the importance Aboriginal people in Canada could play in such a tight election.

“There are more than 50 ridings across the country where First Nations, Inuit and Metis

people can have a determining effect on the result,” he said.

National Chief Perry Bellegarde agreed it's time to put more resources into equality for Aboriginal people in Canada.

“Canada is rated sixth in terms of quality of life, but [if] you apply the same indices to our people and we are 63rd,” he said. “It’s in the best interests of everyone in this country to close the gap.”

Liberal candidate Carolyn Bennett was her party’s representative at the forum and said the NDP’s plans aren’t properly accounted for in their budget.

“We believe we can pay for ours,” she said. “Our commitments are commitments theirs have a lot of questions

She said her party built the Kelowna Accord, which would have provided funding to communities ten years ago, but the NDP brought down the Paul Martin government scuttling that deal.

“We have had 10 years of darkness because of that.”

Direct Link: <http://www.metronews.ca/news/edmonton/2015/10/07/ndp-leader-tom-mulcair-commits-to-aboriginal-communities.html>

Indigenous Albertans urged to get out and vote

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 07, 2015 5:01 PM MT Last Updated: Oct 07, 2015 5:02 PM MT



Brittany McMaster staffed the Rock the Indigenous Vote booth at the forum in Enoch Wednesday. (Gareth Hampshire/CBC News)

Indigenous people who haven't voted in past federal elections are being told that they could make a big difference if they cast a ballot on Oct. 19.

First Nations leaders gathered at a forum at the River Cree Resort in Enoch Wednesday to urge indigenous people to get excited about voting.

Treaty 6 Grand Chief Tony Alexis said issues like the need for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women are key in this campaign. He said the only way to get the government to pay attention is by getting to the ballot box.

"That is something that is being organized by First Nation people on the ground and they're asking to be heard," he said.

"Right now the government is saying we've heard already. We've done the best we can."

Representatives from Rock the Indigenous Vote also attended Wednesday's forum. The group is also encouraging people to vote.

Brittany McMaster from Montana First Nation said many aboriginal people avoided voting in the past, but that has to change.

"It's important to go and be active because no matter who you are, if you live in the country of Canada you are going to be affected by the decisions that the federal government is making."

McMaster said her group isn't telling people which party to vote for. They just want people to cast a ballot.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/indigenous-albertans-urged-to-get-out-and-vote-1.3261653>

Emotional Tom Mulcair says he is 'locked in' to First Nations promises

NDP pledges \$4.8 billion over 8 years for aboriginal education

By James Cudmore, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 07, 2015 7:05 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 07, 2015 8:25 PM ET



The practice of politics, at its root, is about connecting with people — sharing ideas and understanding how others think about an issue, and having one's own ideas understood in the same way.

Tom Mulcair appeared to have that kind of moment Wednesday in Edmonton, where he spoke to an election forum organized by the Assembly of First Nations.

The NDP leader gave a speech in which he unveiled his platform for indigenous communities in Canada. It went well, but it was really just a speech.

The moment of connection happened after Mulcair opened the floor to questions from the crowd and began to hear directly from the people his policies would affect.



NDP Leader Tom Mulcair chats with Cree elder Cecil Nepoose at an Assembly of First Nations meeting on Wednesday in Edmonton. (Ryan Remiorz/Canadian Press)

Amid all the heavy scripting of the campaign, it was a rare moment of realism. Mulcair's handlers were forced to cede control of the moment and let what would happen, happen.

It was in this question and answer session, extended once, and then twice, wreaking havoc on his campaign schedule, that Mulcair made his connection.

His voice caught in his throat, his eyes misted, and "Angry Tom" as he's been called, was nowhere to be seen. This was Emotional Tom, who felt moved by the experience of being smudged and prayed over by Cree elders in the moments before his speech.

It was here, in this moment, that Mulcair said he was "locked in" to the people in that room, and committed to fulfilling his promises.

John Shirt, a Cree man, had just taken up position behind one of three microphones. He spoke first in Cree, and then in English, concluding with a caution: "The old people warned us. Don't ever trust the white man."

Shirt invited Mulcair to win his vote by coming to pray and learn his people's traditions.

Mulcair might have sensed there was a connection available here — an opportunity to be understood as a fellow human.

"It is a humbling experience listening to you speak today about the successive failures and the betrayals and why you were told correctly not to trust people like me," he said.

"Before I came in here today, I had a prayer ceremony with a lot of your elders, and smudging. And that for me," Mulcair said, pausing as if to regain control of his cracking voice, "locks me in to you."

He paused again, and his eyes appeared to mist. "We're going to get it done."

"Thank you," he added, with his voice cracking.

'Nation to nation' relationship

Mulcair was happy to talk about the moment later, beaming widely and joking he'd long been accused of not showing enough emotion. He spoke about a sunrise ceremony he attended on Victoria Island, in the middle of the Ottawa River, getting up before dawn, to attend with local First Nations members "simply because I wanted to show respect."

The NDP leader brought up the name of his wife, Catherine Pinhas, who he said had accompanied him on a tour across the country in 2013 when he heard from many First Nations members.

"Boy do you listen, and do you learn," he said. "I come at this with the deep conviction that we can repair that relationship with our First Peoples, and it starts by recognizing that it has to be nation to nation."

"This is about the three Rs: respect, reconciliation and recognition, and that is what has to change. And I guess you could add a fourth R, which is relationship," he added.

"The relationship itself is broken."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-votes-2015-ndp-tom-mulcair-first-nations-promises-1.3261517>

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau excluded B.C. First Nations from clean water promise

[National News](#) | October 6, 2015 by [Jorge Barrera](#)



Editor's Note: Story has been updated with Liberal statement sent to APTN late Tuesday.

Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau excluded British Columbia First Nations when he announced Monday evening that his government would fix the water woes afflicting 93 First Nations on Health Canada's drinking water advisory list.

Trudeau made the announcement during a town hall hosted by [Vice News Canada](#).

During the town hall, Trudeau said he agreed with Isadore Day, the Ontario regional chief for the Assembly of First Nations, who called for the next government to commit to ensuring no First Nation community remains under a drinking water advisory within five years.

"We agree with that," said Trudeau.

When a *Vice* journalist pressed Trudeau on whether he was saying no First Nations would be under drinking water advisories within five years, he qualified his statement. Trudeau said it only applied to the 93 First Nations which are currently on Health Canada's [drinking water advisory list](#).

"In all those 93 communities, yes," said Trudeau.

Trudeau excluded, in one fell swoop, the 25 First Nations in B.C. that are currently under drinking water advisories.

Health Canada stopped reporting water advisories for First Nations in B.C. back in 2013. Those numbers are now reported by the First Nations Health Authority in the province.

Russell Diabo, a policy analyst who helped developed the Liberal party's election platform in the early 1990s, said it's surprising Trudeau would exclude First Nations in B.C. in this announcement. One-third of all First Nation communities are in B.C.

"You would think his advisers would give him better advice," said Diabo, who helped craft the Liberal party's Aboriginal affairs platform for the 1993 federal election. "He probably isn't fully briefed on the complexity of all these issues."

The NDP has not released their Indigenous issues platform, but it's doubtful the party will unveil any ground-breaking funding promises on First Nation infrastructure because leader Thomas Muclair has committed the party to balanced budgets, said Diabo.

"They will be hamstrung in terms of what they are going to spend," he said.

That platform will be released Wednesday.

The Conservatives have not made any new or major commitments to First Nations.

The Harper government says it has invested about \$3 billion in water and waste water infrastructure between 2006 and 2014. The federal 2014 budget also committed \$323.4 million over two years to improving water and wastewater systems on reserves.

The Liberal party issued a response late Tuesday evening on the apparent exclusion of B.C. First Nations from Trudeau's promise.

"The use of that particular stat was meant to highlight the scope of the problem. Rest assured, our commitment is to all First Nations communities across Canada struggling with issues surrounding clean drinking water," said the statement.

The party is also vague on how it would pay to fix the water issues facing the 93 communities listed by Health Canada.

In Ontario, for example, some First Nations have been under advisories since the Liberals were in power.

The Neskantaga First Nation has been under a drinking water advisory since 1995 while Deer Lake First Nation and Eabametoong First Nation have been under an advisory since 2001.

In Quebec, Kitigan Zibi has been under an advisory since 1999.

The majority of the communities currently on the Health Canada list were added under the Harper government.

In this year alone, 12 First Nation communities from Ontario were added to the list.

The Liberals have not earmarked any specific funds to deal with First Nation water woes in their platform costing document.

The Liberal party sent *APTN* a statement saying some of the money in the party's \$20 billion green infrastructure fund would be used for First Nation water issues. The same fund, which is to be spread over 10 years, has been identified by the party for a number of other promised priorities.

The Liberal party statement also said a Trudeau government would reengage with First Nations on the \$5 billion Kelowna Accord struck by the Paul Martin Liberals in the dying days of that minority government.

The 2005 Kelowna Accord took 18 months to negotiate and it was struck with all Indigenous groups, including First Nation, Metis, Inuit and off-reserve First Nations people. The \$5 billion was to be spread out over 10 years.

A Kelowna-level funding promise would fix First Nation water and wastewater infrastructure problems only if every single dollar was used on that specific issue.

According a 2011 study commissioned by the federal Aboriginal Affairs department, it would cost about \$4.7 billion over 10 years to get First Nation water and wastewater infrastructure up to the department's own standards. The report said First Nation communities needed an immediate \$1.2 billion to deal with high-risk systems.

Aboriginal Affairs said in a response to the report that it planned to invest in 25 per cent of systems the study identified as high risk by 2015-2016.

Water is only a portion of the staggering infrastructure deficit faced by First Nations.

According to a 2012 study sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs, First Nation communities across the country need about \$5.2 billion in capital investments to improve on-reserve housing.

The study concluded that over the 2007-2031 timeframe, Ottawa needed to invest about \$21.3 billion (in 2009 dollars) for First Nation housing.

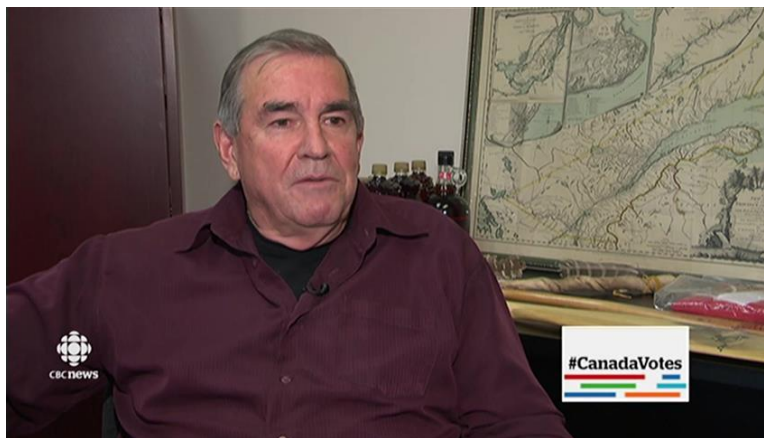
None of the three main federal parties are promising anywhere close to these funding levels.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/06/liberal-leader-justin-trudeau-excluded-b-c-first-nations-from-clean-water-promise/>

Aboriginal elders feeling need to vote for 1st time in federal election

'1,187 missing and murdered women versus one niqab? That's another travesty.'

By Julie Ireton, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 8:42 PM ET



When it comes to voting, there's potential for a considerable sea change for at least one First Nations reserve on Oct. 19.

Right now on the Kitigan Zibi reserve near Maniwaki, Que., elders are talking about getting out and voting — and for many, it would be for the first time.

"I've been surprised to hear some of our elders say they're going to vote. They're dissatisfied this time with the government that's in power," said Jean Guy Whiteduck, chief of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Algonquin community and a senior citizen himself.

Whiteduck said he's thinking about voting even though it's something he usually avoids.

"They [the government] just pass laws and railroad right over our rights issue. That's what's frustrating. That's what's maybe getting First Nations to consider voting, saying maybe a government change is warranted at this time and maybe we can influence it to some extent."

That influence could be significant in some regions of the country, if First Nations people do get out and vote.

In the last election, turnout on First Nations was just 44 per cent, compared to about 60 per cent for the general population.

Kitigan Zibi, about 130 km from Ottawa, is in the Pontiac riding where the most recent census data shows 13 per cent of the population identified as aboriginal.

Currently, it's a tight three-way race. The incumbent is NDP, but the riding has elected both Liberal and Conservatives in recent contests.

Idle No More movement empowered youth

Norm Odjick, director general of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, is a generation younger than Whiteduck and said the Idle No More movement has given some young aboriginal people a feeling of empowerment.

"I think with this election we'll see more people getting out to vote," said Odjick. "The youth are more proactive and they want to see change. I've seen a lot of messages on social media where people are saying they're going to vote."



Norm Odjick, director general of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, thinks the Idle No More movement has empowered many aboriginal youth.

Chief Whiteduck said the Algonquin nation has never signed a treaty, so traditionally the local approach has been to stay out of the federal process.

"Our community over the years has stayed neutral, we said we're not part of Canada," said Whiteduck.

Dissatisfied with campaign issues

Claudette Commanda, a grandmother, Kitigan Zibi band councillor and teacher at the University of Ottawa, said she's watching the campaign closely — but that none of the leaders are talking about the issues that matter to her people including education, housing and clean water.

"1,187 missing and murdered women versus one niqab? That's another travesty," said Commanda.

"The niqab should not even be an issue — period. The first women of this country, that's the issue here. It's not about covering our faces. It's about human lives here that are at stake and that's what the candidates should be focusing on."



Claudette Commanda says the politicians are not talking about the important issues.

Two young women, Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander, disappeared from the Kitigan Zibi reserve in 2008 and have never been found. Commanda said concern over [murdered and missing indigenous women](#) is always close to the surface.

She said she's still thinking about voting this time around.

Perry Bellegarde, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, announced in September [he plans to vote this time](#), even though it has been his "long-standing practice" to stay away from the polls.

"On Oct. 19, I will vote in this federal election in support of a government committed to closing the gap between First Nations people and Canadians. I continue to encourage all First Nations people to vote."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/aboriginal-elders-feeling-need-to-vote-for-1st-time-in-federal-election-1.3260641>

Care for aboriginal kids 'unsuitable,' 'under-resourced'

Union report alleges 'patchwork' system is under-staffed, hamstrung by complexity and needs more accountability

By Lori Culbert, Vancouver Sun October 8, 2015



Alex Gervais, a teen in foster care, died at an Abbotsford hotel.

Less than three weeks after the death of an aboriginal foster youth at his unsanctioned home in a hotel, the union representing social workers will issue a report today claiming B.C.'s protection services for native children are culturally inappropriate and inadequately funded.

"The political leadership of our province must take responsibility for properly prioritizing and resourcing B.C.'s aboriginal child, youth and family welfare system to avoid any further tragedies," says the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union report, which was provided to The Sun in advance.

"Services and supports for vulnerable aboriginal children, youth, families and their communities are being compromised by a patchwork welfare system that is largely culturally unsuitable, under-resourced, severely under-staffed and struggles under its own complexity."

The report, *Closing the Circle: A Case for Reinvesting in Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Services in British Columbia*, was based on feedback from child protection workers represented by the union.

It comes at a time when multiple agencies — including the children's ministry, the provincial children's watchdog, and the coroner's service — are investigating the Sept. 18 death of Alex Gervais, 18, who fell or jumped from the fourth floor window of an Abbotsford hotel where he was living for months in violation of child welfare rules.

Another case that illustrates the troubles within the province's aboriginal child welfare system is that of Paige Gauchier, 19, who died less than a year after she "aged out" of foster care, the report says.

The young native woman's tragic life ended in 2012 with an overdose in the Downtown Eastside.

Aboriginal children represent half the kids in care in B.C., even though native people make up only five per cent of B.C.'s population — a disparity that must be changed, native leaders have consistently said.

"As we all know too well, the existing system is broken, and desperately needs to be fixed," Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, says in the foreword to this report.

"Our social services system is overly complex and under resourced. It completely ignores our culture and history. It needs greater transparency and accountability."

Children's minister Stephanie Cadieux issued a statement Wednesday night, saying her ministry has taken recent steps to improve aboriginal child welfare, such as working with native leaders on new policies and competency training for front line staff. It has also appointed Grand Chief Ed John as senior adviser on aboriginal child welfare.

"The B.C. government recognizes the challenges that many of our First Nations and aboriginal children, youth and families face. We will take the time we need as a ministry to review their recommendations from *Closing the Circle* in the context of the other work currently underway," Cadieux said.

The report says the system needs better co-ordination for the sake of vulnerable youth who may be served by multiple agencies that don't always communicate well: the ministry has several aboriginal service teams as well as social workers with native kids in their caseloads; 23 delegated aboriginal agencies, overseen by the ministry, provide services on- and off-reserve; the federal government is responsible for funding, but not delivery, of services for status First Nations; and community-based social service agencies, some contracted by the ministry, offer a variety of support to at-risk families, although they have faced funding cuts and long waiting lists.

Creating delegated agencies was the right move in terms of returning child protection authority to the bands and reserves, said Doug Kinna, the BCGEU's social worker representative. But the implementation has been poor, he added.

"They've been doing it piecemeal. That creates chaos," he said in an interview Wednesday.

There is friction between the ministry and its delegated agencies, which often struggle to share files, leading to "significant delays" in helping vulnerable aboriginal children. "The delivery of services has become slow, dysfunctional and unresponsive," the report says.

The delegated agencies are tied to the ministry for rules, partial funding and accreditation to perform full child protection duties, a process that can take up to 10 years.

The report found "a stifling disparity" between the funding for partly delegated agencies in the north and ministry teams, preventing them from taking urgent action even when ministry staff is not available in remote communities.

Aboriginal child protection workers on both the ministry side and the delegated agency side, though, have funding complaints.

Three-quarters of ministry workers and two-thirds of agency workers said their offices were inadequately staffed and resourced, complaining of a reduction in adoption workers; vacancies and leaves not filled; shortages in hard-to-recruit areas; and high staff turnover or burnout.

The report further says there has been "a rapid loss" of aboriginal workers in both areas. Only 16 per cent of ministry Aboriginal Services workers and half (54 per cent) of delegated agency workers identify as First Nations, Metis or Inuit.

"We need to be more proactively recruiting members from First Nations to actually work within aboriginal child welfare," BCGEU president Stephanie Smith said Wednesday. Ministry social workers also voiced concerns that the cultural training they received was inadequate and did not help them with these files.

Smith urged the ministry to accept the report's recommendations.

"We have a shared interest in making certain that children in this province are experiencing safe and supported childhoods," she said.

Last year, the union released a similar report, Choose Children, which found that since 2008, ministry funding had been cut by \$44 million before inflation. The government immediately committed to hiring 200 new social workers, but concerns about caseloads and other recommendations remain unaddressed, BCGEU says.

Children's representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond is expected to release a report today on child protection staffing in the ministry.

When asked about that Wednesday, Minister Stephanie Cadieux said 110 of the new social workers are now working and the remaining 90 should be employed by January.

Direct Link:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/care+aboriginal+kids+unsuitable+under+resourced/11422418/story.html>

Will more aboriginal voters head to the polls?

2015 election reality could encourage a higher indigenous voter turnout

By Micki Cowan, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 9:07 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 9:16 AM CT



Agnes Pranteau, 74, casts a vote for the NDP during advance voting at Otineka Mall on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN). Pranteau says despite internal turmoil within the party's elected officials, she consistently votes for the NDP. (Chris Glover/CBC)

To vote or not to vote?

Aboriginal people in Canada have historically been less likely to vote in federal elections, with a turnout of just 46.4 per cent in the 2011 election.

This year, though, there are signs that number could be on the rise. Here's a look at some initiatives that could lead to a higher aboriginal voter turnout.

Polling stations on reserves



A voter holds his voter information card at a polling station during the 41st Canadian general election in Etobicoke, Ont., on May 2, 2011. THE CANADIAN PRESS/ (Nathan Denette/Canadian Press)

Elections Canada is in discussion with First Nations around Saskatchewan to have more polling stations located on reserves. Last election there were 210 on-reserve polls

Marie-France Kenny with Elections Canada said they are still discussing the option with bands this year and won't know the final numbers until the election. However, in the Regina-Qu'Appelle riding, Kenny said that at least 10 of 14 reserves will have at least one polling station on election day.

Saskatchewan saw increases of on-reserve voter turnout in a number of ridings in the 2011 federal election.

The highest increase in Saskatchewan was in the riding formerly called Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, where Elections Canada said turnout increased "substantially."

Push from the Assembly of First Nations

The Assembly of First Nations has been encouraging its members to vote. In early September it released a document calling for changes in the 2015 federal election.



Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde gestures during a news conference to outline the AFN's priorities for the upcoming federal election, in Ottawa, Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. (Canadian Press)

Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, called on First Nations people at that time to show up and vote, and help improve aboriginal voter turnout.

The assembly identified 51 federal ridings where First Nations voters could change the outcome of the election, including seven Conservative-held ridings in Saskatchewan.

Push from local initiatives

A new effort in Saskatchewan is working to get aboriginal people to vote this election.

Indigenous Vote Sask. is a non-partisan volunteer-run group that's working to support aboriginal voters and make sure they cast their ballots.

Right now it is helping indigenous voters register to vote and helping make sure voters have correct voting information. The initiative also actively promotes voting using social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

Click below to watch the pro-vote video made by Indigenous Vote Sask.

More indigenous candidates

The number of aboriginal candidates running in this election is up from the last campaign, with 49 indigenous candidates nominated across Canada as of the beginning of September, compared to 33 in 2011.

In Saskatchewan, six candidates of indigenous background are currently seeking federal seats. In 2011 there were five. Earlier this campaign there were seven indigenous people running in the province, but the NDP's Sandra Arias for Battlefords-Lloydminster has since dropped out of the race.

The candidates are more spread-out this year as well. Last election four of the five indigenous candidates in the province were running in the same riding, Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River.

The six indigenous candidates seeking office in Saskatchewan are:

Conservative

- Incumbent Rob Clarke (Cree) - Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River

NDP

- April Bourgeois (Métis) - Regina-Wascana
- Georgina Jolibois (Dene) - Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River - mayor of La Loche since 2003

Liberal

- Lisa Abbott (Cree) - Saskatoon West
- Della Anaquod (Saulteaux, Cree, Dakota) - Regina-Qu'appelle
- Lawrence Joseph (Cree) - Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/will-more-aboriginal-voters-head-to-the-polls-1.3261318>

Métis rights case finally before Supreme Court of Canada

It took 16 years to get the case heard by the high court

By Karina Roman, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 10:47 AM ET



In 1999, prominent Métis leader Harry Daniels started the landmark Métis and non-status Indian rights case that is before the Supreme Court Thursday. Daniels died in 2004. (Métis Council of Prince Edward Island)

A much anticipated court case about Métis and non-status Indian rights is finally before the Supreme Court of Canada Thursday, 16 years after the legal wrangling began.

The top court is being asked to determine whether the approximately 200,000 Métis and 400,000 non-status Indians in Canada have the right to be treated as "Indians" under the Constitution Act and fall under federal jurisdiction.

Métis and non-status Indians argue that because neither the provinces nor Ottawa have been willing to accept jurisdiction, they have fallen through the cracks.

"So you see them showing up on our streets in our major cities, not properly educated, without proper health care, without proper social services; the forgotten people, said Joseph Magnet, lead counsel for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP).

The landmark case was launched in 1999 by prominent Métis leader Harry Daniels, but it did not go to trial until 2011. In an historic victory, the Federal Court ruled in the Métis and non-status Indians' favour, declaring they fall under federal jurisdiction, meaning they could try to negotiate access to federal programs and services.

'Most disadvantaged of all'

In his 175-page judgment the trial judge highlighted the real effects of a lack of status when he quoted an internal government document on the matter: "The Métis and non-status Indian people, lacking even the protection of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, are far more exposed to discrimination and other social disabilities. It is true today that in the absence of federal initiative in this field they are the most disadvantaged of all Canadian citizens."

After the federal government appealed the ruling, the federal Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's ruling in favour of the Métis, but not in favour of non-status Indians.

Neither lower court gave the Métis and non-status Indians the additional declarations they were looking for: that if they do fall under federal jurisdiction, the federal government has a fiduciary obligation to them and an obligation to negotiate with them.

CAP appealed to the Supreme Court, hoping to get a final determination. In a sign of how big the stakes are, the case has 12 intervenors, including aboriginal organizations and provincial governments.

"We've been treated as a people without rights and basically as a third class aboriginal peoples," said Clément Chartier, president of the National Métis Council, one of the intervenors in the case.

Harry Daniels died in 2004. His son, Gabriel Daniels, says he believes his father was put on earth for this case, to fight for the betterment of his people.



Gabriel Daniels is the son of the late Harry Daniels who started the landmark court battle for Métis rights in 1999. Daniels appears in front of the Supreme Court of Canada on Oct. 6, 2015. (CBC)

"One of the big reasons he was here was to do this," Daniels says. "It's really an honour to see it unfold and I just hope it goes the way we want."

Federal position

The federal government continues to argue that the framers of the Constitution did not intend Métis to be part of Section 91(24) of the Constitution, which spells out that "Indians" are the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government.

And the federal government says in its factum that even if Métis and non-status Indians were to get that recognition, it would not compel Parliament to "exercise that legislative power in any particular way."

That is why CAP says it wants the court to also impose both negotiating and fiduciary duties on the federal government.

"Then they can't keep denying that they have to do something," says Dwight Dorey, CAP national chief.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/m%C3%A9tis-rights-case-finally-before-supreme-court-of-canada-1.3261226>

Tom Mulcair vows 'nation to nation' relationship with Indigenous Peoples

\$4.8 billion promised over 8 years for aboriginal education

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 07, 2015 1:02 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 07, 2015 5:23 PM ET



NDP Leader Tom Mulcair laid out measures Wednesday that a New Democratic government would take to establish a "nation to nation" relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Speaking before representatives of the Assembly of First Nations and the Enoch Cree Nation on the Stony Plain Indian Reserve in Edmonton, Mulcair said if elected his government would make investments to improve the lives of aboriginal people and put an end to the "two Canadas" that currently exist.

"There is a Canada where clean drinking water is simply taken for granted, it's a fact of life, and families live in the comfort of quality, affordable housing. And there's another Canada, where the basic right to clean drinking water remains out of reach and families live in homes that are overcrowded and unsafe," Mulcair said.

"There's a Canada where children have access to the very best classroom conditions. And there's another Canada where schools are dramatically underfunded and learning conditions are unacceptable by any measure," adding that gaps between the two Canadas "grow wider with every decade of discrimination."

The package of commitments outlined by Mulcair was anchored by a promise to create a cabinet-level committee chaired by Mulcair, with the intention that all government decisions "respect" treaty rights and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which the current Conservative government has not signed.

"I truly believe it is time for a new era based on a nation to nation relationship," Mulcair said before beginning his speech, which was delayed briefly because he met in private with community elders before the event began.

"Ottawa is turning a blind eye to conditions in aboriginal communities — something that is unacceptable in a developed country."



Mulcair laid out a litany of promises that a New Democratic government would fulfil after the Oct. 19 vote. It would:

- Remove the 'punitive' two per cent funding cap imposed and maintained by previous Liberal and Conservative governments.
- Increase investment in First Nations by \$1.8 billion over the next four years and \$4.8 billion over eight years based on an annual escalator.
- Improve critical infrastructure in indigenous communities, including clean water and sanitation facilities, with \$375 million over four years.
- Provide \$96 million over four years and long-term funding of \$800 million over 20 years to support infrastructure projects.
- Call an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women within 100 days of taking office and provide \$50 million to support it.
- Commit \$68 million to revitalize indigenous languages.
- Improve health services available for indigenous people living in urban centres with an investment of \$120 million.

Mulcair also outlined initiatives he previously announced on the campaign trail that would indirectly affect indigenous people, including billions of dollars for affordable housing initiatives, a [\\$100-million Mental Health and Innovation Fund for Children and Youth](#), which would include \$5 million for a suicide prevention strategy for at-risk populations, of which First Nations, Métis and Inuit are a part.

The NDP leader also reiterated a pledge he made during a campaign trip to Iqaluit last week, during which he promised that a New Democratic government would invest [\\$32 million to improve and expand Nutrition North](#), which increases access to healthy and sustainable food for isolated northern communities.



NDP Leader Tom Mulcair promised billions in new investments for First Nations education, health care and language revitalization at a campaign stop in Enoch, Alta. (Ryan Remiorz/Canadian Press)

The campaign event ended with a question and answer session with the audience, during which some people shared emotional stories that illustrated challenges indigenous people face in a country that for many years attempted to destroy their traditions and way of life through forced assimilation and infantilizing policies.

Mulcair thanked the speakers for their candour and vowed to usher in a new era of relations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit if the NDP forms government.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ndp-indigenous-health-education-1.3260438>

Metis Dan Vandal is the front runner in Winnipeg riding

[Investigates](#) | October 5, 2015 by [Todd Lamirande](#)



Someone who is no stranger to APTN looks poised for the win in Winnipeg. [Dan Vandal](#) is running for the Liberals in [Saint Boniface-Saint Vital](#). He will be up against [Francois Catellier](#) of the Conservatives, [Glenn Zaretski](#) of the Green Party, and former provincial NDP cabinet minister [Erin Selby](#).

Vandal has certainly never turned away from a fight, as he started boxing at age 15 and turned pro a few years later; he was once ranked the number one Canadian middleweight. Vandal dropped out of high school and did manual labouring jobs. Vandal has had his arm raised a lot over the years, having been a Winnipeg city councilor since 1995. He was appointed deputy mayor in 2003, and acting mayor a year later when Mayor Glen Murray stepped down to run federally. But he was down for the count in 2004, when he lost a bid to become Winnipeg's mayor to Sam Katz. Vandal regained his council seat in 2006 and has held it ever since.



Vandal is no stranger to Aboriginal issues, although he only learned of his family's Metis roots well into adulthood. He was employed by the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre as a social worker before becoming a city councilor. During his time in civic politics he has supported the idea of the establishment of urban reserves in the city and came up with a plan to increase municipal support of Aboriginal ventures. Vandal is well-known to the staff here at APTN. He has served on its board of directors and held the position of chair from 2009 to 2013.

Like most Liberal candidates in this election, Vandal has jumped on Justin Trudeau's promise to increase spending on infrastructure. Vandal's team [produced a slick video](#) where he touted how infrastructure will create jobs, boost productivity and enhance the quality of life.

Vandal has been unofficially running for the past two years and has had a head start on the other candidates. And if the polls are to be believed, Vandal is set to re-take the riding back from the Conservatives. "I don't trust polls," Vandal [told CTV](#). "It's a cliché but the only poll that matters, is the one on election day." But Vandal does not have incumbent Shelly Glover to contend with, as she retired to go back to work for the Winnipeg Police Service.

NDP opponent Erin Selby is well-known as a former provincial health minister. But Selby and four other cabinet minister's resigned last year, unhappy with the leadership of Premier Greg Selinger. When the bilingual (French & English) Vandal heard of her candidacy, he tweeted, "I welcome Erin Selby to race (sic). Look forward to debates in both languages." A dig at the fact Selby's French is limited.

Vandal has been a popular politician in the old part of St. Boniface, where his city council ward is located. The expanded federal riding includes St. Vital where Conservative Francois Catellier can expect the most support. But it looks like a safe bet to say this riding will stay in Metis hands (Glover was also Metis). It would be a fitting result since this is the place where Louis Riel lies buried.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/10/05/metis-dan-vandal-is-the-front-runner-in-winnipeg-riding/>

Aboriginal Sports

Aboriginal soccer hero honoured in new memorial tournament

Inaugural Harry Manson Legacy tourney connects aboriginal, non-aboriginal and homeless soccer players

By Duncan McCue, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 03, 2015 11:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 03, 2015 3:34 PM ET



The Native Education College soccer team, newly formed to play in the Harry Manson Legacy tournament, is keen to participate in a tourney that pays tribute to a First Nation soccer star. (Clair Askew)

More than a century after he passed away and his role as a soccer trailblazer was seemingly lost to history, Xul-si-malt is having one helluva year.

Better known as Harry Manson, Xul-si-malt was the only player of aboriginal descent to play on the three Nanaimo premier soccer teams from 1897 to 1905 — but his accomplishments were largely forgotten after his tragic death in 1912.

That changed last November, when he was recognized as a "pioneer" by [Canada's Soccer Hall of Fame](#), an honour which has led to one posthumous accolade after another.



Harry Manson (Xul-si-malt) has been inducted into Canada's Soccer Hall of Fame, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, and Nanaimo Museum Sports Hall of Fame. (BC Archives)

Now, Vancouver soccer teams are readying to breathe life anew into Manson's achievements, by competing in the first-ever [Harry Manson Legacy Soccer Tournament](#).

One of the key aspects of the tournament is that it's open to aboriginal and non-aboriginal players, men and women.

"Everyone can play. No one is excluded. I truly believe those were Harry's values," says Robert Janning, the tournament organizer.

"Over one hundred years after his passing, Harry's story and his outlook on life can still give so much to the world today."

Overcoming racism

The Harry Manson Legacy Tournament includes four teams, from Vancouver-area First Nation communities and urban aboriginal students, to players from the Salvation Army and Portland Hotel Society who are homeless or recently homeless.

'The racial diversity that exists in the city of Vancouver does not exist on the soccer fields.' - *Andrea Reimer, Vancouver's Deputy Mayor*

Vancouver's Deputy Mayor Andrea Reimer helped organize a team for the tournament that unites the City of Vancouver, Musqueam First Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, and Squamish Nation, in hopes of overcoming barriers.

"The racial diversity that exists in the City of Vancouver does not exist on the soccer fields," says Reimer, who has been an active soccer player since the age of five. She recalls playing in her youth against "tough and terrific" female First Nations soccer players who she feels could have become elite players.

"Had there been an active program to support [aboriginal girls], they could have brought women's soccer to a higher level faster, but that support wasn't there."

In Harry Manson's days, racism was almost palpable. He was one of the first aboriginal players to win a B.C. provincial soccer championship, and guided a Snuneymuxw First Nation team to an unprecedented city championship.

Local newspapers reported incidents of jeering white fans shouting "Kill the savages!" when Manson and other Snuneymuxw players took to the pitch.

After his accidental death at the age of 32 – he was run over by a train while hitching into town to get medicine for his child – the coroner's report referred to Manson as a "drunken Indian."



Robert Janning (blue shirt) stands with descendants of Harry Manson at induction of Xul-si-malt into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. (Becky Wesley)

Janning, a part-time taxi driver, played a pivotal role raising attention for Manson's accomplishments after unearthing his story while researching soccer's history in B.C.

He was struck by archival news reports which not only illustrated Manson's skill but also his determination to break colour barriers in a sport then dominated by white people.

"The racism he was surrounded by, he didn't care: 'I don't care if you're white, if you're red, I just want to play soccer.' I think that sends such a positive message in today's world where there's a lot of hidden segregation," says Janning.

Inspiring new generation

The Native Education College (NEC) in Vancouver is entering a squad, keen to participate in a tourney that pays tribute to a First Nation soccer star.

"There are so many phenomenal First Nation athletes in the communities, and often they don't receive the same kind of recognition that athletes in the mainstream Canadian sport system receive," says Claire Askew, sport and fitness coordinator at NEC.

"It's been really inspirational for our players to learn more about the legacy of Harry Manson."

NEC has never fielded a soccer team, because of lack of funds. But the Manson tournament is free, and a local community centre donated gym time for the team to practice. The newly-created NEC Nighthawks are co-ed, with players from 20 to 60 years old, hailing from many cultural backgrounds.

Nighthawks coach Terry Point of the Musqueam First Nation hopes Manson's legacy encourages young aboriginal athletes to dream big.

"One of the hardest things for First Nations kids is having that will to leave home, and do the training necessary to become a pro athlete. The more we recognize people that have succeeded in that goal, all the better," says Point.

'Soccer has a special way of bringing people together.' - *Robert Janning, tournament organizer*

Janning is volunteering his time as tournament organizer, and the modest tournament costs are covered by donations to the [Friends of Harry Manson website](#).

The indoor, five-aside competition will be held in North Vancouver on Oct. 17, followed by a feast. Janning hopes the tournament will become an annual event.

"This is a special opportunity that facilitates aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities getting to know one another," says Janning.

"Soccer has a special way of bringing people together."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/memorial-tournament-honours-aboriginal-soccer-hero-1.3253578>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Sled dogs in an age of climate change

by [C.W. Nicol](#)

Special To The Japan Times

Oct 3, 2015

When I first went to the Canadian Arctic in 1958, sled dogs were a part of life for the indigenous Inuit and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and part of the scenery and the soundscape for everyone in those frigid far-northern reaches.

Humans crossed from Siberia to North America more than 10,000 years ago, but around 200 B.C., peoples from the Thule culture — named after an archaeological site in northern Greenland — produced experts in hunting and the use of marine mammals.

With small, speedy kayaks and much larger framed boats called *umiaks*, these people — whose ancestors lived around the Bering Sea — took not only seals but also walrus and huge bowhead whales. They used harpoons that collapsed or folded once struck, thus saving the precious shafts from being broken. Inflated seal skins with ivory mouthpieces and plugs were used as floats attached to the harpoon lines, slowing down the prey when it tried to dive or swim away, and keeping it afloat when dead.

The cold climate enabled them to store large amounts of meat and blubber, though they used all parts of the animals they killed. As Arctic marine mammals do not generally carry parasites or diseases dangerous to humans, they could ingest blood, meat and blubber raw, giving them all the vitamin C they needed. During the long, dark, freezing winters, blubber also provided fuel to give light and warmth and enable people to melt snow and ice.

These people brought with them an ancient Asian breed of dog that some people call “husky,” and which today’s Inuit call *qimmiq*. Undoubtedly these were originally hunting partners and watchdogs, but unlike other, older Arctic cultures, the Thule people also had light, flexible sleds and, with their dogs to pull them, they could travel long distances. As a result, they spread all the way across to Greenland and down the coast of Labrador, replacing older Arctic cultures and becoming the ancestors of modern Inuit.

The huskies of Arctic Canada and Greenland have a thick double coat, with long, coarse, waterproof guard hairs protecting dense softer fur beneath. The males are bigger than the females, weighing from 30 to 40 kg, and up to 70 cm at the shoulder, with a thick mane

of fur that makes them look even bigger and stronger. Huskies' coats can be all colors — white, black, silver or brown — with or without patches, spots, bibs and socks. Eyes, too, are sometimes pale blue, but also brown, green or yellow.

Like Japanese native breeds including the Akita, Kishu and Shiba, they carry their furred and feathered tails up over their backs, and in the cold and snow a husky can sleep outside, all curled up, with its tail over its nose.

Huskies get excited over bears, and before the Inuit had rifles, the dogs would gang up and taunt a polar bear until it stood on its hind legs and the hunter could thrust a lance at its throat. I have seen how a pack of sled dogs, released from their harnesses, will charge after and surround a bear, slowing it down long enough for the hunter to get closer with his rifle.

The dogs can also help to locate ringed seals' holes in the ice that are covered in snow in the depth of winter, a time when the seals don't leave the water. As the sea ice freezes, ringed seals — known to the Inuit as *netsik* or *nattiq* — keep several holes open because they have to range over the sea bottom for food. Then snow covers them until spring, when seals — the most abundant ice seals in the northern hemisphere — haul out onto the ice. Averaging about 1½ meters long with a weight of about 50 to 70 kg, ringed seals give birth to a single pup when the ice is still at its most solid, maybe 2 meters thick. The mother makes a small snow dome by a hole called an *aglu*, where the pup is shielded from wind and weather, just as the Inuit can be snug and warm in a snow-dome igloo.

In the winter, Inuit hunters traditionally wait by the snow-covered seal holes, usually making a little hole in the snow with the tip of their harpoon, then licking and freezing a tuft of hare fur or owl feathers to the side of the little hole that would flutter when the seal came up to breathe — at which point the hunter would thrust down through the snow with his harpoon.

Seals don't come up at the same hole each time, and they will avoid one near any kind of sound or disturbance, so it's easier to get one when hunters cooperate, spreading out and waiting quietly by holes a dog has found for them.

The first few times I went to the Arctic, the use of dog sleds was still common. To be a hunter meant having dogs, and that meant you had to hunt to feed them as well as your family. Then, in 1961 and '62, on an expedition with the Arctic Institute of North America to Devon Island — at roughly the size of New York state, the biggest uninhabited island in the world — we began testing an infernal machine with a single rubber track that was later to be called a snowmobile.

Those we tested bogged down in snow and broke their tracks, so they were not very "mobile." I far preferred dogs, but as our leader didn't want any animals killed, we couldn't use a dog team as we'd have to hunt seals to feed them. In the following years, however, the snowmobiles were much improved — with many of the best made in Japan

— but convenience and speed weren't the only reasons they replaced sled dogs in most areas.

That was also because, in the Canadian Arctic especially, the Inuit were encouraged or coerced to live in larger communities, where their children could go to school. That meant more hunters and their dogs gathered together, so the surrounding areas soon had very little game — which is why the Inuit traditionally lived in small, widely scattered communities, traveling to meet and share with each other. I think that made them one of the most welcoming people in the world.

Meanwhile, this summer when I went on an Adventure Canada cruise aboard the Ocean Endeavor (see September's "Notebook"), we visited three small Baffin Island communities. They were all strangely quiet. No sled dogs.

We were also invited to the coastal hamlet of Itilleq in western Greenland — a visit facilitated by Aaju Peter, a lawyer, activist and teacher who was awarded the Order of Canada in 2011 for her efforts in defending the culture and rights of the Inuit.

I consider myself very fortunate to have sailed with her on that trip; she is a wonderful, articulate person who was born in Greenland and had lived in Itilleq as a little girl until she began going to school in Denmark at the age of 11. In 1981 Aaju went to Iqaluit — which lies on the south coast of Baffin Island and is the capital of the Canadian province of Nunavut — where she married a Canadian Inuk.

One of the things Aaju has fought against is the banning of seal skins by the European Union. As for the United States, should I cross into even Alaska wearing my fine sealskin anorak, it would be confiscated at the border. All this despite the fact that the Inuit not only need seals' meat and blubber for their families and dogs, and the skins for making clothing and boots, but they also relied on selling the some skins to bring in cash. Taking this income from them was totally unfair.

Itilleq is a lovely little coastal hamlet of hunters and fishermen, with a population of around 70 who welcomed us, total strangers, into their homes for coffee, biscuits and cakes. The young people were proud of their traditional Greenland summer clothes — but to me this place, too, was strangely quiet. Our host told us they had shot all their dogs because the sea ice now freezes later and melts earlier, so they can't hunt enough seals over the ice — and therefore cannot feed their dog teams.

Inuit in Canada also told us about the increasing unreliability and decreasing amounts of sea ice — and of birds, insects and fish coming north that they had never seen before. The media is constantly reminding us of the desperate plight of polar bears, but what I most worry about is that without reliable, thick sea ice, the ringed seal — the most important seal in the Arctic — will not be able to reproduce and will vanish from vast areas.

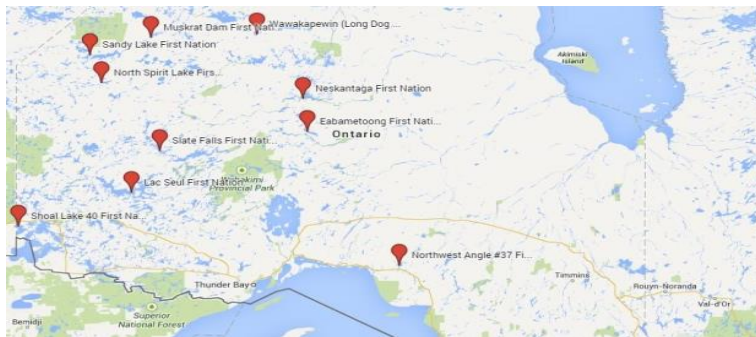
The Inuit have no doubt about climate change; what is happening is altering not only the ice and the weather, but thousands of years of partnership between the hunting Inuit and their dogs. Some very sincere people, Inuit and others, are doing their best to preserve the northern dogs and the art of traveling with dog sleds — but I hope it won't just be for the wealthy and for tourists.

Direct Link: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2015/10/03/environment/sled-dogs-age-climate-change/#.VhLTmG76gwB>

Federal election 2015: Kenora, Ont., candidates talk First Nations water quality

Kenora, Ont., riding candidates say if elected, water quality in First Nations communities will be addressed

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 06, 2015 12:47 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 06, 2015 1:03 PM ET



Ontario is home the majority of community-wide boil water advisories in the country, including these 10 First Nations in Northern Ontario. They have been without safe drinking water for more than a decade. (Google Maps)

Candidates running in the Kenora, Ont., riding say they'll push for safe drinking water for First Nations communities, like Neskantaga, where residents have had to boil their water for more than 20 years.

Yesterday, First Nations leaders in Ontario met in Toronto and called on all federal party leaders to address the state of water and health services in aboriginal communities.

The bad water in Neskantaga is being blamed for illnesses and other health issues, such as sores and rashes.

New Democrat candidate Howard Hampton said there is money to fix the problem, but it's not being spent.



Former Ontario NDP Leader Howard Hampton is running in the Kenora riding. ((Jacques Boissinot/Canadian Press))

"The money was there, the money is still there and the money needs to be used to address these issues."

Hampton said work needs to start immediately.

Hampton said it was a "great travesty" the Department of Aboriginal Affairs had money in its budgets to address the problem, but chose not to spend it, instead handing it back to the federal Ministry of Finance.

"I think it's equally shameful that you have federal and provincial governments talking about 'oh, we're going to develop the Ring of Fire,' meanwhile, this community, which sits almost at the heart of the Ring of Fire is told, 'yeah, but we can't afford safe, clean drinking water for your community,'" said Hampton.

The Green Party's Ember McKillop said it's hard to believe nothing has been done.



The Green Party's Ember McKillop. (Martine Laberge/CBC)

"I'd be pushing for money that had been recognized as being necessary to run First Nations reserves adequately way back with the Kelowna Accord," she said.

"We've signed the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People and we need to uphold that, and that would be an important first step is ensuring that people have access to clean water and sanitation," she said.

The Liberals' Bob Nault said spending more on infrastructure will help communities like Neskantaga.



Kenora riding Liberal candidate Bob Nault. (bobnault.ca)

"Their deficiency in infrastructure is caused by a lack of funds and a lack of resources and a lack of working relationships with the federal government," he said.

"My job, of course, as an elected MP, is to change all that," said Nault.

Nault said he'd be looking at just under a year to get started on the work, owing to the fact it would be a major infrastructure spend, which would need to be part of a budget, which typically gets passed in late winter-early spring, meaning funding could roll out in the next fiscal year.



Conservative cabinet minister Greg Rickford. (Riccardo De Luca/Associated Press)

In an e-mailed statement, Conservative candidate Greg Rickford said money has been spent improving water quality in communities in the riding, and across the country.

He added he will continue to work with Neskantaga's leadership to deliver on the community's priorities.

"I will continue to deliver on the priorities of First Nations communities and we understand that all First Nation communities deserve to have access to safe, clean drinking water."

Rickford also said that another important issue is ensuring First Nation communities have well-trained and certified water treatment plant operators.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/federal-election-2015-kenora-ont-candidates-talk-first-nations-water-quality-1.3258708>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Northern Gateway Talks Left Out First Nations' Governance Rights: Lawyer

CP | By Laura Kane, The Canadian Press

Posted: 10/02/2015 6:52 pm EDT Updated: 10/02/2015 6:59 pm EDT



VANCOUVER — Two First Nations waging a court battle to overturn approval of the Northern Gateway pipeline project say federal officials refused to discuss their claim of decision-making power over ancestral lands.

Lawyer Cheryl Sharvit said the Nadleh Whut'en and Nak'azdli are not declaring the right to veto resource projects on traditional territories in British Columbia's Central Interior.

But she said the bands' asserted authority to govern their lands should have at least been considered by the Crown during consultations on the \$7-billion proposal by Calgary-based Enbridge (TSX:ENB).

"The scale of the potential harm from Northern Gateway in their territory is unprecedented. They have never faced a risk this great from their perspective from a single project," Sharvit said.

She said the Crown's refusal to first negotiate with the Nadleh and Nak'azdli "does serious damage to the goal of reconciliation and protection of aboriginal rights."

The Crown excluded the issue from the talks because it decided the question of control over First Nations' territories would be better dealt with in the treaty process, Sharvit said.

Eight aboriginal bands are in the Federal Court of Appeal in Vancouver to argue Canada violated its legal duty to consult with and accommodate First Nations before approving Northern Gateway. More than 200 conditions were attached.

The 1,200-kilometre twin pipeline would carry diluted bitumen from Alberta's oilsands to the coastal district of Kitimat, B.C., where tankers would ship it overseas.

The court is considering a total of 18 legal challenges during the hearing, which is set to conclude Oct. 8. Its outcome could have far-reaching implications for aboriginal authority over oil and gas projects.

Many First Nations in B.C. have not signed treaties and have unresolved land claims. But they argue a landmark Supreme Court of Canada ruling in June 2014 giving the Tsilhqot'in Nation title to its territory means Ottawa must seek consent from First Nations to approve developments on their lands.

Michael Lee Ross, a lawyer for the Gitga'at on B.C.'s northwest coast, said the Crown must make a "good faith" effort to win First Nations approval even if their title has not been recognized by a court.

"We're not talking about a situation where if you fail to get agreement, it's a show stopper, which can happen in the case of title," he said.

He argued Canada's failure to seek agreement with the Gitga'at represents a failure to "uphold the honour of the Crown" and promote reconciliation.

Northern Gateway and the federal government are set to make their arguments next week.

Billions of dollars in gross domestic product, tax and royalty revenues are at stake. The company estimates the pipeline will boost Canada's GDP by \$300 billion over 30 years.

Spokesman Ivan Giesbrecht has said Northern Gateway accepts First Nations' traditional land use rights and remains committed to working with aboriginal communities.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/10/02/northern-gateway-talks-excluded-question-of-first-nations-governance-rights_n_8234760.html

Clayton Thomas' wolf killing trial leans on Yukon First Nations history

Tahltan man says it was his aboriginal right to kill wolves, territorial government disagrees

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 02, 2015 1:59 PM CT Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 2:17 PM CT



Clayton Thomas was charged under the Yukon Wildlife Act two years ago, after he shot two wolves in his Whitehorse neighbourhood. (CBC)

Aboriginal trade in Yukon and the historic value of wolf pelts were in dispute Thursday in a Whitehorse courtroom, as a man fights wildlife charges for shooting wolves in the Mount Sima subdivision.

Clayton Thomas was charged under the Yukon Wildlife Act two years ago, after he shot two wolves in his neighbourhood. He said the two wolves had been lingering around his property and he was worried for the safety of his family.

He has also argued in court that it was his right as an aboriginal Canadian to kill the wolves.

The territorial government said it was illegal for Thomas to shoot the animals and said he was preparing to illegally sell the skins.

Thomas is a member of the Tahltan First Nation, in northern B.C. He is represented at trial by a Tahltan oral historian, Kusta.

Kusta told court on Thursday that Thomas should not be on trial because Canada cannot enforce laws on citizens of other nations.

[Kusta has also argued](#) that it has been customary for young Tahltan men to travel throughout northern B.C. and into Yukon without losing their right to hunt. He says it was normal for Tahltan people to live off the land and occasionally sell furs for food or other items.

A historian, testifying for the territorial government, disputed those claims.

Adrian Clark said there's no evidence members of the Tahltan First Nation had much historic contact with First Nations people in the Whitehorse area. He also cited one historical source that says wolf pelts were not historically sought after or traded.

Kusta disagreed and pointed out there are huge gaps in the histories written by people of European descent. He said the oral history is more accurate.

Both sides will make their final arguments in this phase of the trial next month.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/clayton-thomas-wolf-killing-trial-leans-on-yukon-first-nations-history-1.3254659>

Yukon First Nations could decide who represents the territory

By [Lewis Rifkind](#)

| October 4, 2015

At the Yukon First Nation Forum for the Federal candidates held on September 29th, hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations, it was a packed house of over two hundred people in beautiful downtown Whitehorse. All the political parties were represented, including the Conservative candidate. He has attended some but not all of the various debates held in the Yukon. This debate was broadcast on a First Nation owned community radio station, CHON-FM, and was live-streamed on YouTube.

There were two introductions to the debate, one by the Chief of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Doris Bill, on whose traditional territory the forum was held. The other introduction was by the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, Ruth Massie.

The points raised over both introductions included the almost complete lack of concern from the current Federal government regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, inadequate consultation on changes to the [Yukon environmental assessment bill](#) (Bill S-6), the need for action on the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the anti-terrorism bill which could theoretically target First Nation activists (Bill C-51) and the absence of the "honour of the Crown" when addressing Yukon First Nation treaty rights and unfinished land claims negotiations in the territory.

With that setting the tone for the debate, it was time for the candidates from the NDP (Melissa Atkinson), the Liberals (Larry Bagnell) and the Greens (Frank de Jong) to rip into the Conservative candidate (Ryan Leef). After they had finished, the audience had a go.

While there seemed to be a small organized Conservative cheering section in the audience, Leef was the only candidate to get booed. That was to his response, in answer to a question from the audience, on when will Canada get rid of the first-past-the-post system. He actually said Canadians would be confused by a new system and it would probably lead to lower voter turnouts. He also foolishly stated that it would take too long a time to sort out a new system because the Conservatives would want to hear from each and every Canadian. The Green candidate, de Jong, got in the best zinger of the evening when he pointed out that the Conservatives most definitely did not consult with each and every Yukoner on some deeply unpopular changes to the Yukon environmental assessment act (Bill S-6). That got one of the the loudest cheers of the evening from the audience.

Oddly enough, this election campaign has seen no sign of the Harper appointed [Yukon's Senator Dan Lang](#). He was the one that introduced it into the Senate. One would think that he would be around to try and take some of the heat off their Parliamentary candidate on this controversial issue. But nary a sign of him. Perhaps the Conservative spin doctors reckon he would be too much of a reminder of the various indignities that the current federal government has inflicted upon the Yukon.

The various Yukon First Nation governments have reacted to this in part by not only hosting this forum but also by getting their citizens registered. Some have [hired people](#) to make sure their citizens are registered to vote and understand the electoral process. Thanks to the Fair Elections Act it is now more difficult for voters living in smaller communities to have appropriate identification. A drivers license might have a post office box as the address, which on its own is now not good enough for Elections Canada. Many Yukoners, including quite a number of First Nation citizens, are in this situation.

First Nation voters without adequate electoral identification can now get a [letter of residence](#) from their own government showing that they do live within a region or community administered by that particular First Nation. This combined with a picture identification acceptable to Elections Canada should be good enough to vote. There have been some unique Yukon quirks though. It has recently [come to light](#) that two small rural and mainly First Nation communities will not have polling stations on election day. Some residents will have to drive 64 kilometres -- one way -- to vote.

Despite this, there will be most certainly be more Yukon First Nations voting this time around. This is bad news for the Conservatives. Given their track record they cannot grow beyond their base support in the Yukon, and any new voters to the total voting pool will almost certainly be voting for one of the other parties.

Everyone is very much aware the Conservatives won by only 132 votes last time. There are about 37 thousand people in the Yukon, with 20 per cent of the population being First Nation. If the percentage of First Nation voters increases only marginally the Conservatives are doomed. In fact, looking at some [recent polling](#) it looks like they will probably fall to third place. However, most Yukoners are aware that [last time around](#) it

looked like the Liberals were a shoe-in and a lot of people voted for the Green candidate and have regretted that decision ever since.

There are concerns about strategic voting this time around, but given the potential rise in First Nation voters and the collapse of support for the Green Party (and thus the distribution of almost all of those votes to either the NDP or the Liberals), it will be extremely unlikely the Yukon will be staying politically blue in the future.

The federal Conservatives have treated Yukon First Nations with scorn, contempt and slight regard. Election day, October 19th, will be payback time.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/lewis-rifkind/2015/10/yukon-first-nations-could-decide-who-represents-territory>

Steelhead LNG's Vancouver Island projects get export licence approval

National Energy Board approves 25-year licence for annual export of millions of tonnes of LNG

The Canadian Press Posted: Oct 02, 2015 6:50 PM PT Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 6:50 PM PT



Steelhead LNG says the National Energy Board has approved a 25-year licence for the annual export of up to six million tonnes of LNG from a proposed floating liquefaction and export terminal in Saanich Inlet. (Google Maps)

Steelhead LNG says its two Vancouver Island export licences have been approved — just weeks after the company and the Malahat First Nation announced a proposed liquefied natural gas project north of Victoria, B.C.

Steelhead says the National Energy Board has approved a 25-year licence for the annual export of up to six million tonnes of LNG from a proposed floating liquefaction and export terminal in Saanich Inlet.

The Vancouver-based company says the board has approved four other 25-year licences to export LNG from a project that is still in the exploration stage with a First Nation southwest of Port Alberni, B.C.

Steelhead CEO Nigel Kuzemko says there is still a great deal of work to ensure community, government and regulatory support and approval for both projects.

Malahat First Nation CEO Lawrence Lewis says the agreement with Steelhead to develop the floating LNG plant near Victoria is a chance to protect aboriginal rights while practicing environmental stewardship.

Earlier this year, Steelhead LNG announced it was also partnering with the Huu-ay-aht First Nations to build a [proposed LNG facility at Sarita Bay](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/steelhead-lng-vancouver-island-approval-1.3255318) on Vancouver Island.

The project is still in the feasibility stage.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/steelhead-lng-vancouver-island-approval-1.3255318>

First Nations push back against Eagle Spirit pipeline

Group backed by Aquilinis on publicity blitz, say they have widespread chiefs' support

By Gordon Hoekstra, Vancouver Sun October 4, 2015



A group of protesters gathers in this 2012 photo, outside the Northern Gateway hearings in Prince Rupert. The Northern Gateway project has stalled. But Eagle Spirit Energy is on a publicity campaign, saying it has the support of several First Nations' chiefs.

Key First Nations in northern B.C. refute there is consensus on an oil pipeline concept initiated by some coastal First Nation members.

Eagle Spirit Energy has issued a trio of news releases in the past week, claiming it has signed agreements and has the support of chiefs along the route of its proposed project — an alternate to Enbridge's stalled \$7.9-billion Northern Gateway project.

Eagle Spirit — backed by the Aquilini Group, which owns the Vancouver Canucks — hoped to gather First Nations support because the project would be First Nations-led and ship upgraded oil, not the molasses-like bitumen seen as particularly harmful to the environment in the event of a spill.

But First Nations representing vast traditional territories in north-central B.C. say it makes no difference that oil might be upgraded. And despite the recent public relations exercise, they say they still oppose the Eagle Spirit project because it would help expand oilsands production and be a risk to salmon-bearing rivers and the ocean if there was a spill.

“They can say whatever they want. Any expansion of the oilsands is something we are very much opposed to, so that hasn't changed. That will not change,” said Yinka Dene Alliance coordinator Geraldine Thomas-Flurer.

The alliance represents five First Nations in north-central B.C., also adamantly opposed to the Northern Gateway route.

Lake Babine Nation, which is not part of the alliance and claims a large traditional territory, also does not support the Eagle Spirit concept.

“It's not coming from us,” said Lake Babine chief Wilf Adam. “Every time we've been approached, we've said no.”

Eagle Spirit has yet to publish a route for its concept, but representatives say the route would be pushed farther north than Northern Gateway, away from important salmon-bearing rivers.

Eagle Spirit would move the oil pipeline terminus from Kitimat to near Prince Rupert, where they say Lax Kw'alaams hereditary chiefs and matriarchs have signed on in support.

However, Lax Kw'alaams elected mayor Garry Reece has warned that support is not universal in the community, which has already voted against a \$1.15-billion benefits package for a natural gas project over environmental concerns.

Earlier this year, the group Coastal First Nations, which represents nine First Nations, excluding the Lax Kw'alaams, said Eagle Spirit's claims of First Nation support was misleading because there wasn't a single First Nation on the coast that supported oil exports.

In a letter to Eagle Spirit Energy in 2014, the Haida Nation said they hoped the company would abandon the oil pipeline idea.

In addition to support from some Gitksan hereditary chiefs, Eagle Spirit has received public support from the chiefs of the Burns Lake and Nadleh Whut'en First Nations.

In an interview, Burns Lake chief Dan George acknowledged they did not have universal support, but said he believed the use of refined oil and moving the pipeline north would gather more support from First Nations.

George said he also supports the project because it will reduce the need for shipping oil by rail, a greater safety risk than a pipeline.

He pointed to the Lac Megantic rail disaster in 2013 that killed 47 people in Quebec as a warning.

Oil is not being shipped by rail to the northern B.C. coast at this point, but George said he believed it would happen eventually.

“My support is for the way they are going about doing all the environmental (work). All the bands along the route get to have their input,” said George.

He said they have a “couple” of investors but would not name them.

The Eagle Spirit idea, first floated in 2013, includes an oil upgrader and pipeline at a cost of \$18 billion (which the Aquilini Group says it and its partners would underwrite). It would need to win producer and customer backing.

Experts have said, however, that a pipeline concept based on using refined oil is a non-starter because that's not what Asian customers want and oil companies would not back building costly upgrading capacity.

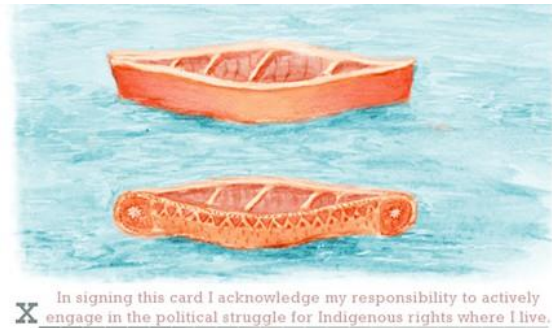
Read more:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/first+nations+push+back+against+eagle+spirit+pipeline/11413761/story.html#ixzz3nogtaAuF>

Stop thinking treaties only impact First Nations

We are all treaty people, says Solidarity Halifax.

By [*Jacob Boon*](#)



One of the "treaty cards" to be handed out tonight. Illustration and design by Aiden Gil, a NSCAD student and Nova Scotia's indigenous representative at the Canadian Federation of Students.

Quick, what are your treaty rights and obligations?

Despite common misconceptions, all Canadians—indigenous or not—have obligations and rights under Canada's treaties. Solidarity Halifax says it's high time we all recognize that.

As such, this evening the public is invited to a free event at the Halifax Central Library which will explore the responsibilities and challenges of all people in upholding the Peace and Friendship treaties. [Between Nations: We Are All Treaty People](#) will encourage a dialogue about how Canada's land and people are governed by treaties.

Sébastien Labelle, a member of Solidarity Halifax's anti-racism committee and an organizer of tonight's event, says recent movements like Idle No More have ignited a surge of awareness regarding the infringement of treaty rights.

"Since then, we've wanted to offer an opportunity to follow up on that questioning and give people an opportunity to understand better what that means," says Labelle.

Treaties between indigenous Canadian governments and the British Crown were first set down in 1701. The British later agreed to a series of "Peace and Friendship" treaties with the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet peoples between 1725 and 1779. Since then, many other treaties respecting governance, land use and resources have been signed from coast to coast both before and after Confederation. All historic treaties made between 1701 and 1923 as well as more modern land claim settlements were reaffirmed and upheld in Canada's Constitution during repatriation in the 1980s. As stated [by Aboriginal Affairs](#), "the Government of Canada and the courts understand treaties between the Crown and aboriginal people to be solemn agreements that set out promises, obligations and benefits for both parties."

But those solemn agreements aren't always respected. As an example, says Labelle, simply look at the chasmic discrepancy in the quality of life between most First Nations communities and other Canadian citizens.

Indigenous Canadians are disproportionately affected by [environmental damage](#), [health concerns](#), [lack of clean water](#), [higher rates of criminalization and incarceration](#), lack of [access to education](#), a crisis of [missing and murdered women](#), [high risk of suicides](#), a [genocidal eradication of culture](#) and a history of being ignored unless [something valuable is found under their land](#).

"In looking at the human suffering that exists within communities that surround us, or that we may be part of, we really have an obligation to examine what's going on, in Canada and First Nations communities," says Labelle.

No contract is unilateral, he adds. As such, the Solidarity Halifax organizer wants all Canadians—especially non-indigenous citizens—to recognize their moral and legal obligations.

"A treaty is an agreement between two parties," Labelle says. "If they concern First Nations, then necessarily they concern other Canadians as well; the descendants of European settlers and anyone who's a Canadian citizen or living on this land. There needs to be an understanding of that. If there are treaties in place, then everyone who lives here is a treaty person."

In an effort to encourage such examination, the organizers behind tonight's event will be passing out "treaty cards." Printed with the treaty rights and obligations for non-indigenous Canadians, the cards are a way to move towards meaningful action and change the way people think about their relationship to Canada's treaties. They'll act as a symbolic and literal reminder of a non-aboriginal Canadians' obligations under the Peace and Friendship treaties, and also as a spin on the indigenous Status cards issued by the Canadian government.

"There's no mirroring card for people who are not First Nations to signify or recognize that as descendants of European settlers or non-native Canadians, we also have rights and responsibilities towards the land that we live on," Labelle says. "This was to hit home that we are all treaty people."

TREATY RIGHTS

Non-indigenous residents of Mi'kma'ki are **entitled** to:

- Live in peace and share the land with its owners and original inhabitants, the Mi'kmaq
- Participate in economic activity in order to earn a living
- Self-governance and law enforcement
- Moderate use of natural resources
- Freedom of language, religion and creed
- Education that reflects their language and culture

TREATY OBLIGATIONS

Non-indigenous residents of Mi'kma'ki are **obligated** to:

Protect and preserve the land and natural resources for all future generations

—Respect Mi'kmaq title to and sovereignty over the land

—Ensure the health, well-being and dignity of their indigenous neighbours

—Help preserve and strengthen the language and cultural heritage of the Mi'kmaq people

—Stand for justice and restitution for historic and current wrongs committed against

Mi'kmaq people

—Educate other settlers, including their children, about their

government's treaty obligations and the history of relations between indigenous people

and non-indigenous Canadians; and ensure that treaty obligations are met now and in the future

It's a small gesture, but not insignificant. Especially now, as Mi'kmaq History Month begins and a federal election looms. Given the crises faced by so many First Nations communities, it's all the more important for every Canadian to remember that these treaties are an agreement from both sides to share land and resources, and live in peace and friendship with each other.

"Of course, when we really look at the power dynamics that exist, 'sharing' is a pretty generous term to use," Labelle says. "We can't honestly in good faith say that we are living in peace and friendship with First Nations people."

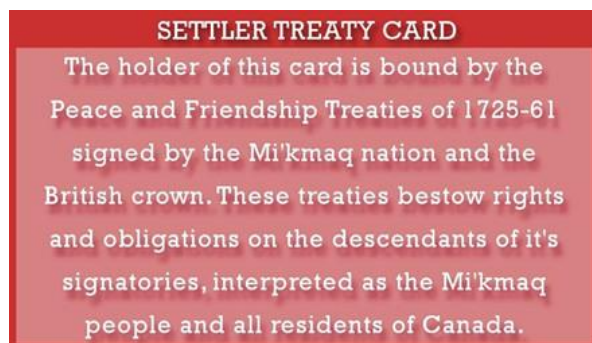
Between Nations: We are ALL Treaty People

Monday, October 5, 6pm

Halifax Central Library, 5440 Spring Garden Road

Free

[Facebook event page](#)



Direct Link: <http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/stop-thinking-treaties-only-impact-first-nations/Content?oid=4974248>

Northumberland-Peterborough South candidates address First Nations land claims

EXAMINER STAFF

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 12:27:32 EDT AM



Northumberland-Peterborough South riding federal candidates Green party Patricia Sinnott, left, Liberal Kim Rudd, NDP Russ Christianson, and Conservative Adam Moulton participate in an all-candidates debate at Campbellford District High School on Thursday night. The debate was hosted by Trent Hill Chamber of Commerce. Jessica Nyznik/Peterborough Examiner/Postmedia Network

Federal election candidates in the Northumberland-Peterborough South riding, which includes Otonabee-South Monaghan and Asphodel-Norwood townships in Peterborough County, are being asked a series of eight questions by Postmedia Network to answer in their own words.

Beginning today, for eight days, we will publish a question and the candidates' responses.

The response to each question could be up to 250 words in length and will appear unedited and unchanged, except for length. Any response exceeding the 250-word limit was cut at the end of the sentence preceding the limit.

Today's question: If elected, what will you do to improve relations and consultations with Alderville First Nation over land claims; and what is in your party platform that supports this?

Russ Christianson, NDP

There are two First Nations in our riding, and both are included in the Williams Treaties: the Mississaugas of Alderville First Nation, and Hiawatha First Nation.

I enjoyed visiting the Alderville First Nation at their Prairie Day last week, and I had the privilege of 'dancing' on traditionally harvested wild rice (to de-hull it). I will be meeting with more people in Alderville and Hiawatha before election day.

Over the past thirty years in my consulting business, I have worked together with a number of First Nations communities in Ontario to develop community businesses. If elected as the MP for this riding, I will meet regularly with Alderville and Hiawatha First Nations to discuss their needs and how the Government of Canada can help their communities.

An NDP government will work with Indigenous communities on a nation-to-nation basis to:

- Establish a national inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls within our first 100 days.
- Implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Consult and act on the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Improve essential physical infrastructure such as housing, roads and drinking water facilities.
- Address the education deficit that's left 74% of First Nations schools in need of major repairs (Inspired by the Shannen's Dream movement).

Adam Moulton, Conservative

Our Conservative Government remains committed to improving the lives of Canada's Aboriginal People. If elected MP, I will work with the Alderville First Nations on the issues that are important to their community. For example, our Government supported Alderville First Nation in the construction of the Alderville Solar Farm. This is the first alternative energy project in Canada to be 100% owned by a First Nation community and is expected to provide employment for 25 community members during the construction phase, and to provide sustainable revenue as well as ongoing employment once operational. Our Government is committed to increasing economic development opportunities for all First Nations. In addition, recognizing the incredible contributions that Aboriginal communities can make to the labour force, our Government has taken significant steps to equip First Nations people with the skills and opportunities needed to participate in the economy. For example, we have taken measures to improve First Nations education on reserve, including early literacy programming and other supports and services for First Nations schools and students.

Kim Rudd, Liberal

I feel I have a good personal relationship Chief Jimbob Marsden of Alderville First Nation. Our party has some exciting new opportunities for aboriginal Canadians. We will invest \$50 million in additional annual support to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, providing additional financial assistance to Indigenous leaders and communities to provide proper support and awareness to educational opportunities. Empty gestures of

the Harper government like the Safe Drinking Water on First Nations Act, the Matrimonial Property Act, or the First Nations Financial Transparency Act, are, on closer inspection, more akin to federal interference - dictatorial, even - than initiatives that actually aim at working in partnership to support First Nations governance.

Patricia Sinnott, Green

While meeting with the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs General Assembly on Sept. 28, 2015, Elizabeth May announced that the Green Party welcomes First Nations, Metis and Inuit leaders to work in partnership with federal, provincial-territorial and local leaders on the Council of Canadian Governments. As equal partners at the table, Indigenous leaders will decide how to best allocate financial resources in their communities for healthcare, housing or developing a responsible resource strategy that meets the needs of Indigenous people.

The Green Party will implement the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and initiate a national inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women. Green MPs will also reform post-secondary education funding including removal of the 2% annual cap on increased funding for all First Nations and Inuit students. A National Housing Strategy that includes \$800 million for basic infrastructure on reserve and federal funding for education in traditional languages as well as support for First Nations living downstream from oil sands development whose food, water and air are contaminated, will also be provided.

Greens will also conduct timely, good faith negotiations to settle land and rights issues and work with First Nations to find innovative solutions for implementing treaties and negotiate self government agreements and find acceptable ways to phase out the Indian Act with the consent of First Nations. These strategies will ensure that consultations take place in a respectful manner, nation to nation, with both Alderville and Hiawatha First Nations located within the Northumberland-Peterborough South riding.

Direct Link: <http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/2015/10/06/northumberland-peterborough-south-candidates-address-first-nations-land-claims>

Ottawa defends 'thorough' Northern Gateway review in court

By Laura Kane, The Canadian Press October 6, 2015



Jacqueline Lee-Tam wears face paint to simulate oil while attending a rally held to show opposition to the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline in Vancouver, B.C., on Tuesday June 17, 2014. The federal government is giving a conditional green light to Enbridge Inc.'s controversial \$7-billion Northern Gateway pipeline project between the Alberta oilsands and the B.C. coast.

VANCOUVER — Canada spent almost \$4 million to help First Nations participate in a “thorough” and “fair” environmental assessment of the Northern Gateway pipeline project, court heard Tuesday.

A lawyer for the government has asked the Federal Court of Appeal to dismiss 18 legal challenges aimed at overturning its decision to approve the \$7-billion proposal from Enbridge (TSX:ENB).

Lawyer Dayna Anderson said federal officials began meeting with First Nations in 2006 and revised the environmental assessment to address their concerns, most notably by adding marine shipping to the scope of the review.

She added the federal government provided the \$4 million to aid 46 aboriginal bands' involvement in the process for such items as costs of travel or expert reports. The eight First Nations that launched litigation received more than \$1.5 million of that funding, she said.

“The Crown’s duty to consult isn’t measured in dollars and cents, and we know that, but it illustrates Canada’s attempts to ensure that meaningful participation could be had,” Anderson said.

The federal cabinet approved the project in June 2014 with 209 conditions, including the creation of plans to protect caribou habitats and marine mammals. First Nations, environmental groups and a union filed court challenges, arguing the government failed to consider ecological threats or consult with aboriginal groups.

Many First Nations in B.C. have not signed treaties and have unresolved land claims. But they argue a landmark Supreme Court of Canada decision that gave the Tsilhqot’in title to their territories means the government must not only consult with them, but seek their consent.

Anderson disputed that interpretation, stating the government must only seek consent from nations that have court-recognized title. The Crown chose not to debate First Nations' title or governance rights during consultations on the Northern Gateway pipeline, referring those issues to the treaty process.

Lawyer Jan Brongers said the federal review panel heard both oral and written evidence from indigenous groups and determined the pipeline would not have significant adverse effects on traditional use of their lands.

He said the panel concluded the 209 conditions would mitigate nearly all the ecological risks, apart from threats to certain woodland populations of grizzly bears and caribou, which were found to be "justified" given the expected economic benefits of the pipeline.

"It is our firm position that the order-in-council, which is the culmination of a lengthy, thorough and fair environmental assessment process, which included honourable consultation with the impacted First Nations, strongly deserves to be left in place," he said.

Brongers said previous rulings have set a high standard for a court to toss a decision made by a democratically elected cabinet on a resource project. The judges must find the decision broke the law or had no reasonable basis in fact, he said.

The 1,177-kilometre double pipeline would ship diluted bitumen from Alberta's oilsands to a terminal on British Columbia's north coast, boosting Canada's gross domestic product by an estimated \$300 billion over 30 years.

Northern Gateway and the B.C. government will state their cases later this week, before the hearing is expected to wrap up Thursday.

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/technology/ottawa+defends+thorough+northern+gateway+review+court/11419200/story.html>

What the Daniels case means for Alberta Métis: Opinion

[Jason Madden](#)

Published on: October 5, 2015 | Last Updated: October 5, 2015 6:00 AM MDT



In this April 3, 2006 file photo, members of the Manitoba Métis community take part in a procession to the Manitoba Law Courts in Winnipeg to pursue court action against that province on land ownership issues. Wayne Glowacki / Winnipeg Free Press

This week, the Supreme Court of Canada will hear arguments in *Daniels v. Canada*. The case was initiated by the late Saskatchewan Métis leader Harry Daniels more than a decade ago to make Canada revisit its arbitrary and exclusionary policies toward the Métis and “non-status” Indians (i.e., members of First Nations who cannot be registered under the Indian Act). In the words of the trial judge, these federal policies — or lack thereof — have produced “a large population of collaterally damaged” aboriginal people who are the “most disadvantaged of all Canadian citizens.”

Specifically, the Daniels case will answer the long-standing question of whether the Métis and non-status Indians are included within the meaning of the term “Indian” in s. 91 (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. This head of power grants “exclusive Legislative Authority” for “Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians” to Parliament. Canada has taken an extremely narrow interpretation in relation to this jurisdiction, which conveniently excludes the Métis and non-status Indians. This exclusion has resulted in these groups falling between the jurisdictional cracks of this country.

Both the Federal Court and Federal Court of Appeal have concluded that s. 91 (24) was necessarily broad enough to include all aboriginal peoples — First Nations, Métis and Inuit included — Canada encountered as it expanded from coast to coast to coast following Confederation. This jurisdiction was not limited to “Indians,” as defined by the Indian Act. Nor did it exclude the Métis Nation — which emerged as a distinct aboriginal people in the western territories — prior to Canada becoming the Canada we know today. Despite the overwhelming evidence and solid decisions of the lower courts, Canada continues to argue for an arbitrary, narrow interpretation.

For the Métis Nation, this case is just another chapter in its ongoing “hunt for justice” to begin the process of reconciliation with Canada. While Métis inclusion in s. 35 of the

Constitution Act, 1982 was supposed to be the “starting gun” for negotiations, the Métis have been forced to repetitively turn to the courts to make any progress on s. 35’s promise. From *R. v. Powley* in 2003 to *Cunningham v. Alberta* in 2011 to *Manitoba Métis Federation v. Canada* in 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada has been consistent and unequivocal: s. 35 demands good faith and meaningful negotiations and reconciliation with the Métis people as well.

Unfortunately, Canada has not been listening. The Métis continue to be excluded from federal comprehensive and specific claims processes. They are denied access to programs available to other aboriginal groups. They are often excluded from Crown consultation in relation to their rights. Notably in Alberta, it was the provincial government that needed to step up and work with Métis leaders to address the complete failure of the federal scrip system to provide a land base and needed support to the Métis. Through these efforts, the Alberta Métis Settlements were born, while Canada was and continues to be “missing in action” on playing its necessary role on Métis issues.

Increasingly, independent experts have also recognized Canada’s failings when it comes to the Métis. Vancouver-based lawyer Doug Eyford recently reviewed the federal comprehensive claims policy and urged that Canada “must do more for the Métis” and “develop a reconciliation process to support the exercise of Métis s. 35 rights and to reconcile their interests.” In the same vein, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights has repeatedly criticized Canada for failing to deal with Métis rights and outstanding claims.

It’s clear what needs to happen — real negotiations on Métis rights, lands and self-government, as well as just and lasting settlements. Hopefully, the next federal government will proceed. If not, the Métis are hopeful the Daniels case will provide additional judicial direction that federal inaction is no longer an option.

Jason Madden is a partner in the law firm Pape Salter Teillet LLP, with offices in Toronto and Vancouver, and has been involved in much of the litigation on Métis rights over the last decade. In the Daniels case, he is legal counsel for the intervener, Métis National Council.

Direct Link: <http://edmontonjournal.com/news/national/what-the-daniels-case-means-for-alberta-metis-opinion>

Federation signs treaty with Barrington area Métis Council

[Greg Bennett](#)

Published on October 07, 2015



Elder Paul Crowell looks on as Chief Tony Cunningham signs the treaty with sub chief Rick Crowell by his side.

BARRINGTON -The Métis Federation of Canada has signed a Treaty with the Sou'West Nova Métis Council of Barrington Passage.

In a release, the Federation said it had ten treaties in place with Métis groups, including four Métis organizations in Nova Scotia.

Robert Pilon, the president of federation, noted the western Shelburne County council had been supportive of its position with the upcoming Harry Daniels case in the Supreme Court of Canada, a case that deals with the question of whether the country's Métis and non-status Indians have a right to the same programs and services as First Nations and Inuit.

“This is a very important case and it is largely because of support from our many partners, including the Sou'West Nova Métis, that we have been successful in being granted Intervenor Status with leave to present oral arguments at the Supreme Court of Canada on Oct. 8,” he wrote. “As president of the MFC, I am very proud to have the Sou'West Nova Métis join the Metis Federation of Canada and look forward to working with Chief Tony Cunningham and his council towards promoting Métis unity and rights.”

Direct Link: <http://www.digbycourier.ca/News/Local/2015-10-07/article-4302220/Federation-signs-treaty-with-Barrington-area-Metis-Council/1>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

**Review: A powerful memorial to missing
and murdered aboriginal women**

[Peter Simpson - The Big Beat](#)

Published on: October 2, 2015 | Last Updated: October 2, 2015 2:53 PM EDT



A partial view of the memorial installation *Walking With Our Sisters*, at Carleton University Art Gallery. (Photo courtesy Melody McKiver.)

I'm asking myself when I last saw something so deeply moving in a gallery, and the answer may be never.

I'm walking through the Carleton University Art Gallery, which until Oct. 16 is filled with a single, singular installation to the memory of more than 1,100 aboriginal women, girls and two-spirit people (defined as "another gender role believed to be common amongst most, if not all, first people of" North America.) All 1,180 victims have gone missing or been murdered in Canada over 30 years, and they are memorialized in a global, grassroots art project.

Walking With Our Sisters includes approximately 1,800 vamps, which are the top, decorated parts of moccasins. The vamps were made by people around the world, some of them artists, some of them aboriginal, but many of them not. All of these contributors responded to a call issued by [Métis artist Christi Belcourt](#).

The pairs of vamps are laid out on a red fabric that covers the floor of the gallery's main level, and they form a sort of procession that moves clockwise around the space. The direction, like many aspects of the installation, is Algonquin tradition, as the university sits on traditional Algonquin land.

The vamps are finished, with sparse or intricate detail, yet each is a part of an unfinished moccasin, representing the unfinished lives of the missing and murdered. The decorations are personal reflections of both the manufacturer and the memorialized: there are indigenous motifs and Christian symbols; there are beads and stitching and other materials; there are abstract designs, and the names and portraits of victims. Each pair of vamps is unique, as were the innocents they remember.

To reflect upon each pair would take hours, or days, but even a short time in the space instills in the viewer both a sense of sadness, for so many lives so cruelly taken, and a

sense of community, made of people brought together by this ongoing tragedy, and this project. It's difficult to put the feeling into words, so let me describe the experience. . .

When I first entered the gallery I witlessly walked past a sign that prohibits photographs and shoes. I was gently stopped by women who are overseeing the memorial, and I was suitably embarrassed. I mention the gaffe here because it forced me to slow down and focus.

Now in sock feet, with camera pocketed, I re-enter the memorial and am handed a tiny red cloth sack of tobacco, which I am to hold in my left hand and close to my heart. I'm told the traditional sack will capture my thoughts and emotions and later, with sacks that have been carried by others, it will be burned in a ceremonial fire in a teepee outside the gallery.

I walk slowly past the vamps, past the eagle staffs, the buffalo skull, the miniature canoe set on a small lake of blue silk. The space is reminiscent of a traditional longhouse, and the air is thick with the smell of sweetgrass and sage, which are burned nearby. Aboriginal music plays softly in the background, all of it contributed to the project by musicians from across North America.



A few of the hundreds of pairs of vamps that make up the memorial installation *Walking With Our Sisters*, at Carleton University Art Gallery. (Photo courtesy Melody McKiver.)

I haven't been told to not speak, but silence feels appropriate. I have been asked to not lean over the vamps, to give them their space, as one would a grave. There are tissues available, and I understand why a person could be overcome by a tremendous sense of loss. Used tissues are collected, I'm told, and the tears burned with the tobacco sacks.

I am unsure how to take it all in: as an art critic I am to analyze and compare what I'm seeing, though I'm not sure what I'd compare this to. As a man with a wife, sisters and nieces, I'm outraged. As a white man, I'm conflicted; I know I'm not responsible for the violence, but as a descendant of the culture that has allowed, and continues to allow, so much harm, what is my role in stopping it?

Walking With Our Sisters is a potent political statement that is not presented as a political statement. The installation was scheduled long before the current federal election was called. Yet the election campaign is under way, the gallery is within walking distance of Parliament, and the installation, intentionally or not, lays bare the need for political action. So many women, so many girls, so many lives taken, so many families torn asunder.

In one corner there's a collection of tiny vamps that represent aboriginal children who died in residential schools. I look at them and wonder why so many people persist in the delusion that indigenous Canadians are getting a free ride through rich government programs. Personally, I can't understand how an aboriginal person would trust any government program, with so much harm having been programmed upon them in the past.

What: Walking With Our Sisters,

When & where: to Oct. 16 at [Carleton University Art Gallery](http://carleton.ca/artgallery/)

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/review-a-powerful-moving-memorial-to-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women>

Missing, murdered aboriginal women honoured at Charlottetown vigil

Sisters in Spirit vigils held across Canada to support grieving families

[CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/sisters-in-spirit-vigils-1.3388888) Posted: Oct 02, 2015 7:56 AM AT Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 8:36 PM AT



This is the 10th anniversary of the Sisters in Spirit vigils remembering murdered and missing aboriginal women, which are held all across Canada. (Darryl Dyck/Canadian Press)

Missing and murdered aboriginal woman were remembered at a Sisters in Spirit vigil at Confederation Landing in Charlottetown in pray, song and silence.

'I've seen a lot of changes and it's positive.' - *Judy Clark*

The vigil was one of many held across Canada to support grieving families.

Community members shared how the tragedies have touched them.

"Her name was Debbie — she was murdered in her home — and it really did impact me," said Matilda Ramjattan, chief of Lennox Island First Nation.

"I know a lot of other First Nations across the country have been impacted, and they are still waiting for their loved ones to call home, come home, or at least to be found."

'We live it on a daily basis'

The vigil is organized by a number of aboriginal and community groups as well as the provincial and federal governments.

Participants talked about the violence that has caused the deaths and disappearances of aboriginal girls and women.

"They impact families and communities because we live it on a daily basis. [It is] important put a stop to it now, and work together to find the root causes to these types of violence and create meaningful solutions as we move forward," said Brian Francis who is chief of Abegweit First Nation.

Many say the best way to move forward is a national inquiry into missing and murdered women.

They hope that vigils like these will help.

"I think it was great, raised a lot of questions, I think that we need to come together. I think community has to be aware of issues," said Lisa Cooper, president of the Native Council of P.E.I.

Safe place to talk about abuse

"I think we need to call on the provincial and federal government to help us, as aboriginal organizations, to reduce the factors that lead our women to be vulnerable in our community."

The vigil is important to let aboriginal women know that although the province's aboriginal community is small, it's safe to talk about issues around abuse, said Judy Clark, president of the Aboriginal Women's Association of P.E.I.

"I've seen a lot of changes and it's positive," she said.

"We just continue to have to support our women, to say it's safe to speak out because there's a lot of people that are listening."

The association has developed a resource book of contacts to connect aboriginal women suffering from abuse with people and groups who can help.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/charlottetown-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-1.3253678>

Official home may be coming for missing and murdered indigenous women monument in Saskatoon

City recommending statue be placed in front of police HQ

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 02, 2015 7:14 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 02, 2015 7:40 AM CT



This piece, created by Lionel Peyachew, will be built in front of Saskatoon Police's headquarters. (Saskatoon Police Service)

The next step to give a formal home to a statue to honour missing and murdered indigenous women is coming Monday.

Administration is recommending that the statue be placed in the front plaza of the Saskatoon Police Service's headquarters.

Police and the city offered the public the chance to vote between [three different designs for the statue](#).

Artist Lionel Peyachew's design of a life-sized bronze sculpture of a woman named Wicanhpi Duta Win, or Red Star Woman, won. The sculpture shows a fancy dancer with her shawl as her wings.

If the statue is formally approved, Peyachew will be given three years to finish the project.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/official-home-may-be-coming-for-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-monument-in-saskatoon-1.3253853>

Red dresses seek to draw attention to missing, murdered aboriginal women

Fan-Yee Suen, CTVNews.ca Staff

Published Saturday, October 3, 2015 5:53PM EDT

Last Updated Saturday, October 3, 2015 7:04PM EDT

A Winnipeg-based Metis artist is asking Canadians to take part in a powerful, one-day display of red dresses to represent the country's missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Jaime Black created [The REDress Project](#) five years ago, describing it as an "aesthetic response" to the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

"I began the project because, as an artist, I was looking around and seeing that a lot of families who had lost loved ones don't have much of a platform for having their voices heard," Black told CTV's News Channel on Saturday.



Hundreds of donated red dresses have been displayed in public spaces across Canada, including the Canadian Museum of Human Rights.



Jaime Black created The REDress Project five years ago, describing it as an "aesthetic response" to the issue of violence against aboriginal women.



REDress Project creator Jaime Black is hoping to draw even more attention to the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women by opening up her project to the public. She is inviting Canadians to display their own red dresses to signal their support for indigenous women.

Black collected hundreds of donated red dresses that were later displayed in public spaces across Canada, including the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. Black said her project, which has a haunting visual effect, aims to draw greater public attention to the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

"I figured a way to do that was through my art work," Black said.

Calls for a national inquiry on murdered and missing aboriginal women have been growing since the RCMP revealed last year that nearly 1,200 aboriginal women have been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the last 30 years.

On Sunday, Black is hoping to draw even more attention to the issue by opening up her project to the public. She is inviting Canadians to display their own red dresses to signal their support of indigenous women.

The striking, one-day display of red dresses will coincide with the National Day of Vigils to Remember Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women.

"I'm hoping that the public can support indigenous women by displaying a red dress in their home or business, or coming together as a community and displaying red dresses in other public places," Black said.

Asked why she chose the colour red, Black said it is a "very important sacred colour" -- not only for her, personally, but for many other indigenous groups across Canada as well.

Black said a friend of hers, who is also an aboriginal, explained that red was the only colour spirits could see.

"So (red) is really a calling back of the spirits of these women and allowing them a chance to be among us and have their voices heard through their family members and community," she said.

Black said she hopes her project will inspire local organizations to launch similar projects in the future.

"I'm hoping that community groups will take on and start doing public installations and using that as a tool to have the public have more of an understanding of missing and murdered women."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/red-dresses-see-to-draw-attention-to-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-1.2593772>

Who are Saskatchewan's missing and murdered indigenous women?

Unsolved Sask. cases continue to haunt family members, stump investigators

By Merelda Fiddler, [CBC News](#) Posted: Apr 06, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 06, 2015 10:57 AM CT



Melanie Dawn Geddes was 24 years old. She had three children.

Margaret Blackbird, Naomi Desjarlais, Danita Bigeagle, and Janine Wesaquate are just a few of the 33 names of women who either went missing or were murdered in Saskatchewan and whose cases may never be solved.

Among these names is Melanie Dawn Geddes. The 24-year-old mother of three disappeared walking about four blocks to her home in north central Regina, in the early morning hours of Aug. 13, 2005. Four months later, her remains were found north of the city in a field. In the time between Melanie's disappearance and the discovery of her remains her mother, Valerie Smokeyday said the days all blended together.



This is a picture of Amber Redman attending a powwow, one of her favourite past times. (Dana McNabb Benjoe, Facebook)

"It was very blurry," Smokeyday said. "Some of it I remember and some of it I don't because it was so hard."

With each ground search, largely organized by family, Smokeyday said she'd pause before looking under a shrub or in a hole because the fear of finding her daughter was almost more than she could take. As the days dragged on into weeks and then months, Smokeyday knew something was terribly wrong because Melanie would never leave her three daughters.

After Melanie's remains were discovered, the focus shifted to Melanie's daughters and making sure they were properly supported.

To date, no one has ever been charged with her murder and the Geddes family has been living with a cloud over their heads, questions they fear will never be answered.

"I just want justice to be served," Melanie's oldest daughter, 17-year-old Katie Cleveland said. "I want to find out who did that and ask why they did that to her."

There is also frustration. Several officers and two different police departments have been involved Melanie's case. It's also been more than a year since Valerie Smokeyday has heard from police about what might be happening in her daughter's case.

"It felt like after we buried her that nobody cared. We went to a couple of the conferences and stuff that they had and after that it just died."

A grassroots movement

Lori Whiteman was teaching on Standing Buffalo First Nation, her home community, when one of her former students went missing. Amber Redman disappeared in July 2005, just one month before Melanie Dawn Geddes. Whiteman, shocked by her disappearance, reached out to Redman's mother, Gwenda Yuzicappi.



Danita Bigeagle went missing in 2007 and hasn't been found yet. (CBC)

Whiteman could relate. Whiteman's mother had disappeared in the mid-1980s and it had taken years to get her case on the books. Yuzicappi invited Whiteman to a meeting in Ottawa where the Native Women's Association of Canada was gathering the families of missing and murdered women together.

"I was really thankful for that opportunity," Whiteman remembers. "But it was a little bit overwhelming because I really hadn't talked to anybody because I thought at the time who would I talk to about this, who would care, who would listen."

Turns out a lot of people. At the meeting, Whiteman gathered with Yuzicappi, Pauline Muskego, whose daughter Dahleen was murdered, and Myrna LaPlante, whose aunt had also gone missing. They realized their cases were not isolated, not in their home province of Saskatchewan. In fact, there was a much larger trend going on in Canada.

From there, these women founded some of the early grassroots movements and tried to raise awareness that their mothers, sisters, daughters and friends were disappearing and being murdered and some of those cases were going unsolved. They also tried to make the larger community see that the missing posters and ground searches making the nightly news were not one-off, random crimes. Each story was indicative of a much bigger problem.

Whiteman also credits social media.

"Suddenly, you had a space where you had a national, an international, global audience to the things that were of interest and urgency to you. You could have pictures of people. I just prompted widespread sharing."

The community responds

Today, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is widely known. But in Saskatchewan in particular, the way these cases are being handled has changed and continues to change.

Sgt. Ken Palen is the head of the Historical Case Unit for the RCMP in Saskatoon. It handles all of the cases in the northern half of the province. Palen himself has been part of the unit since about 2007 and many things have changed in his time there.



Melanie Dawn Geddes poses for a photo at her graduation.

He says in the 1960s and 1970s a missing person's case would be added to the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) for about six months. If it wasn't solved, it would then be removed from the system. DNA did not really come into use until the 1980s.

Today, DNA is critical and the smallest samples can break the biggest cases. Police also have criminal profiling, geographic profiling, forensic pathology and statement analysis as well as Violent Criminal Linkage System (ViCLAS). Saskatchewan also has a Missing Persons Taskforce, which resulted in the Saskatchewan Association Chiefs of Police website, a site regularly updated with all missing persons.

Sgt. Palen said his unit now gets involved at the beginning of a missing person's file. They ensure that every effort is made to find a missing person and that things like dental records, DNA and other evidence is gathered and kept in case the does turn cold.

"I was trying to reduce the amount of long term missing," Sgt. Palen said. "Since we've been doing our reviews we have not had any long term missing persons added to our provincial website from the RCMP side of things."

Still, the cases continue to roll in, from drownings, to found human remains, missing persons, homicides and suspicious deaths. Sgt. Palen estimates his unit receives about 15 news cases per year and clears about seven, which is why officer placements in the unit

have been extended from three to five years, to five to eight years. Part of their job is to select which case is next, and there is a system.

"Picture an escalator and a box going up one each step. And each member of our unit has an investigation or two that are on that escalator. As we all focus on, like we work together as a team on one or two investigations at a time," Palen said. "And once that investigation gets to the top of the escalator and its furthered either through charges or there's resolution in some other way. The next case grows life and away it goes."

The families

For those still waiting for resolution, there is a mix of frustration and acceptance.

Moving on with life is important. Until recently, two of Melanie Dawn Geddes' daughters lived with their grandmother, Valerie Smokeyday. Melanie's oldest daughter, Katie, is now living on her own, raising her own daughter, Dustina. The beautiful, happy 18-month-old is a reminder that her grandmother has left a real legacy in children and now grandchildren.

Smokeyday wants people to remember that Melanie's killer or killers remain at large and that her case needs solving.

For others, like Lori Whiteman, she knows the likelihood of her mother's case being solved, is slim. It's not clear where Delores Whiteman went missing or even when exactly.

"I'm no longer at that point where I feel this bitterness and towards law enforcement because they're not doing their job," Whiteman said. "Because I understand, in my mind I understand they don't have the manpower, they don't have the training, they until recently really didn't have an idea of even the stats and extent of how much this is happening across the country — although they probably could have and should have."

Whiteman said she has had to find a way to make peace with her situation. She has left it up to a higher power, and says she is now prepared to hear the answers should they ever present themselves. Whiteman said what is encouraging is the next generation of young women, keeping this issue alive and ensuring that missing and murdered indigenous women are remembered, honoured and that future generations will be less vulnerable.

If you know anything about these cases, or any other missing persons cases, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/who-are-saskatchewan-s-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-1.3010508>

Missing and murdered indigenous women remembered in annual march

Sisters In Spirit march and vigils held across Canada to remember missing, murdered aboriginal women

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 04, 2015 5:18 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 04, 2015 5:45 PM ET



A hundred or so people attended a march and vigil in Montreal to remember missing and murdered aboriginal women. (CBC)

More than 100 Montrealers gathered in Cabot Square to mark the 10th annual memorial march and vigil for Canada's missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

The national Sisters In Spirit march and vigils was founded in 2005 by Bridget Tolley, an Algonquin from the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg in Quebec, about 135 kilometres north of Ottawa. Her mother was hit and killed by an RCMP cruiser in 2001.

'We may have lost one sister, but it's kind of like we all died with her too.' - *Cheryl McDonald*

"It's 10 years later and nothing has changed. We are still asking for help, we need help now," she said.

Tolley and others in attendance at events in Montreal and across the country are part of a national call for a public inquiry into the matter.

Some people hung red dresses outside as a way to commemorate lost loved ones.

Indigenous activists estimate more than 3,000 aboriginal women have been victims of homicide since 1980.

The RCMP's latest reports estimate there have been about 1,181 cases of murdered or missing aboriginal women since then.

'She just never came home'



Cheryl McDonald from Akwesasne, a Mohawk territory in southwestern Quebec, said her sister went missing in 1988. Since then, she's battled a silent but persistent anger.

"She just went away one night and she just never came home. We looked for her, we searched the fields. We huddled together as a family, but it was a hunter that found her. And so we still have questions we ask ourselves that we don't talk too much about as a family. But it forever changed my parents, and her three children who she left behind, as well as myself and my sisters. So we may have lost one sister, but it's kind of like we all died with her too," McDonald said.

She said greater co-operation and collaboration by federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations police forces is needed to truly help address the frequency with which indigenous women go missing or are killed.

"They need to speak together, they need to work together, they need to share expertise with one another. They need to create a network where families can go to police agencies with more equipment, more skills, more detectives who can deal with this," McDonald said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/mmiw-mmaw-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-canada-march-1.3256366>

Saskatchewan rallies for missing and murdered indigenous women

Saskatoon walk begins at 3:30 p.m. at Station 20 West, Regina at 5 p.m. at First Nations University

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 04, 2015 9:06 AM CT Last Updated: Oct 04, 2015 9:06 AM CT



Hundreds of people took part in Saskatoon's 2014 Sisters in Spirit March and Vigil. (Madeline Kotzer/CBC News)

Today marks the 10th anniversary for the Sisters in Spirit March and Vigils across Canada.

The walk raises awareness for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Women Walking Together is a group in Saskatoon. This is the ninth year Women Walking together is participating in the national event.

"As our family was thrust into this whole situation of having to deal with a missing person, there wasn't as much interest. I've seen the interest grow like leaps and bounds." - *Myrna LaPlante*

Myrna LaPlante, co-chair of the group, knows what it's like to have a family member go missing.

"I do have a missing aunt. Her name is Emily Osmond LaPlante," LaPlante said. "She has been missing from the Raymore area since September 2007."

"As our family was thrust into this whole situation of having to deal with a missing person, there wasn't as much interest. I've seen the interest grow like leaps and bounds in terms of academia and in terms of people that just want to support the cause."

LaPlante said they're expecting more than 200 people to attend the Saskatoon walk. It begins at 3:30 p.m. CST at Station 20 West (1120 20th Street W.).

She said it's important to honour the memory of indigenous women and girls that have been stolen from their families.

"All kinds of people (come out): young, old, men, women, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Caucasians," she said. "It's just a real wonderful mix of people right across Canada that will come out."

Escorted by the Saskatoon Police, participants will walk to Avenue P to 22nd Street and then over to Avenue I before heading back to 20th Street and Station 20 West. Soup and bannock will be served following the walk.

Events are also taking place in Onion Lake, Yorkton, La Ronge and Regina today.

Regina will be holding a pipe ceremony, feast, vigil, and round dance at the First Nations University of Canada. It all gets underway at 5 p.m. with the candlelight vigil and speakers at 7 p.m.

If you want to make a donation for the feast, people are asked to arrive between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. Find more information [here](#).

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/missing-murdered-indigenous-women-vigils-oct-4-1.3256130>

Missing and murdered indigenous women remembered at Lethbridge vigil

By Global News, October 5, 2015 5:23 pm



The lives of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls were honoured in Lethbridge as hundreds gathered in an emotional call to action Sunday October 4, 2015. Erik Mikkelsen has the story.

LETHBRIDGE – There was a sombre march through the quiet streets of Lethbridge Sunday evening at the 9th annual Sisters in Spirit vigil, drawing attention to an important issue.

A handful of red dresses hung empty in the trees to symbolize the estimated 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) in Canada over the past 35 years.

Hundreds marched to the beat of a drum, walking with signs and posters of loved ones from City Hall, down 4 Avenue South, and continuing to Galt Gardens.

A vocal supporter for action and answers surrounding MMIW, Lauren Crazybull, said it's about supporting those around the community.

“To come together is mostly to show support for the families. I think the families should be recognized first... the people who are affected most directly should be recognized and supported,” added Crazybull. [“In the past they haven’t had that much support.”](#)

Candles lit up aboriginal and non-aboriginal faces alike. Although not everyone has been affected directly, the turnout showed the community is rallying together for a better future.

“I think it’s that unity, having us together working as one makes sure that we have that harmony, and we can deal with a lot of the issues that are ahead of us,” said organizer LeeAnne Sharp Adze.

Among the attendees were city officials, federal election candidates, Alberta’s Minister for the Status of Women Shannon Phillips, and families of women lost, all calling for action.

Laurie English-Winters, whose daughter Clarissa and son Dakota were murdered last April in Lethbridge, gave a speech about remembering those who have passed.

Lethbridge Regional Police Service Chief Rob Davis said other police chiefs across the country agree it’s a growing issue.

“We’re very proud of the efforts we make here in Lethbridge,” said Davis. “Nationally, whoever the government of the day is after the election needs to seriously consider having an inquest and coming out with meaningful recommendations that will stop the cycle of violence that leads to the tragedies.”

Davis added that the amount of support at the march and vigil shows the Lethbridge community understands the severity of the problem.

“The people here tonight, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, coming together to honour those who are missing, who have been murdered,” said Davis. [“It’s a real sense of hope that we as a community are coming together to address this.”](#)

The vigil was one of more than 100 vigils taking place on Oct. 4 across the country.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2259868/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-remembered-at-lethbridge-vigil/>

Red dresses honour Canada's missing, murdered aboriginal women



Karolyn Coorsh , CTVNews.ca
Published Sunday, October 4, 2015 9:49PM EDT
Last Updated Sunday, October 4, 2015 10:53PM EDT

Rallies countrywide marked the 10th anniversary of what is known as the Sisters in Spirit March, a national day of remembrance for the Canada's missing and murdered aboriginal women.

The red dresses were featured across Canada at rallies, as well as displayed on front lawns, trees and fences on Sunday, to honour and represent indigenous women who are gone, but not forgotten.

Using red dresses was the brainchild of Winnipeg-based Metis artist Jaime Black, who created the [REDress Project](#) five years ago. Black has collected hundreds of donated red dresses that have since been displayed in public spaces across Canada.



Red dresses hang near a memorial for murdered teen Tina Fontaine.

Although Black's installations have been shown in public before, this year the artist asked all Canadians to display a red dress as a sign of support for indigenous women.

Black views the colour red as sacred.

"One woman I spoke to, she's Dakota, and she said red is the only colour that the spirits can see," Black told CTV News.

She acknowledges that the sight of empty, flowing red dresses is haunting.

"It's almost like an empty garment of clothing kind of operates as a marker of those women who are no longer with us," she said.

Bernadette Smith, whose sister Claudette Osborne vanished seven years ago, said red is a “very powerful” colour.

“When I look at it, I think of beauty,” Smith said. “But I also think of the blood that possibly, somebody is carrying on their hands.”

Osborne is among the 1,200 missing or murdered aboriginal girls and women in Canada.

“It’s tough because we don’t even know anything,” Smith said.

Beyond Smith’s front lawn, red dresses were also displayed at marches in Regina and Edmonton.

Several hang near the memorial for Tina Fontaine, the 15-year-old girl whose body was pulled from Winnipeg’s Red River in 2014. Her death was classified as a homicide and remains unsolved.

Although, the REDress Project is not a call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, many who attended the marches support such an investigation.

Says Black: “I’m skeptical that more government legislation or inquiry or whatever paperwork basically, is going to change things on the ground for indigenous women,” Black said.

But she does want Canadians to always remember the lost lives of all the women.

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/red-dresses-honour-canada-s-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-1.2594856>

Vigil commemorates missing, murdered indigenous women

By Jason Warick, The Starphoenix October 5, 2015



Several hundred walkers and marchers gather at Sunday's 10th-annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil to honour murdered and missing indigenous women.

Several hundred marchers headed onto 20th Street to remember missing and murdered indigenous women, and to show support for the families of those who've lost loved ones.

The 10th-annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil started and ended Sunday at Station 20 West. Many of those marching were relatives of women who are gone, but the issue has become an important one for the whole community, organizers say.

"The entire city, the entire country, is now as outraged as we are," organizer Darlene Okemaysin-Sicotte said.

"It's important to keep the memory alive, and this is how the public can support us."

Silverwood resident Phyllis Goertz also attended, and agreed with Okemaysin-Sicotte.

"I think this violence affects all of us. We need action," she said. "Society is only as strong as its weakest link."

Politicians, federal election candidates and other dignitaries mingled with neighbourhood residents before elder Maria Linklater opened the program with a prayer. Participants were given a red arm-band with a button attached commemorating the 10th anniversary of the vigils.

"These walks keep the memory alive, but we also need to ask why this is happening," said Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas. "There are solutions. It can be done."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/vigil+commemorates+missing+murdered+indigenous+women/11414607/story.html>

Harper Again Rejects Call for Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada

By [Tamara Khandaker](#)

October 6, 2015 | 2:30 pm

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has once again rejected a call to conduct a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, saying "we are way past the time for further study."

Harper, who is running for re-election, was asked Tuesday by VICE's Matty Matheson at a rally in Whitby, Ontario, whether he would change his position on the UN-requested inquiry.

"Our government position on this has been very clear," said Harper. "We have moved forward with a whole series of criminal justice reforms that deal with the problems of violence against people generally, violence against women in particular."

Harper said there have already been about 40 studies on the topic, and that the ruling Conservatives were moving forward with a plan of action that "deals with issues of prevention, investments in preventative services, particularly on reserves, that deals with issues of inquiry, of investigation."

"Most of these murders, sad as they are, are in fact solved," he said. "We are way past the time for further study, this is a time for action, and our government is going to proceed with our action plan."

In a 2014 report, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) found 1,107 Aboriginal women had been murdered and another 164 went missing between the years 1980 and 2012. It surveyed data from all police jurisdictions across the country.

As of June 2015, 106 murder and 98 missing cases remained unresolved, according to the RCMP.

This means about 90 percent of the murder cases have been solved.

According to the report, solve rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homicide victims are comparable, but they differ depending on the province.

For example, in Nova Scotia, the solve rates are 80 percent, while in New Brunswick, they are 100 percent for Aboriginal women. For non-Aboriginal women, they're as low as 84 percent in British Columbia, and as high as 100 percent in PEI, the Yukon, and the

Northwest Territories. However, the rates fluctuate when the numbers are small, like in Atlantic Canada.

The report also says certain homicides appear to be resolved less frequently — for example, for Aboriginal victims in the sex trade, the solve rate is less than 60 percent, while for non-Aboriginal victims, it's 65 percent.

The overall average time to solve female homicide was similar — 212 days on average, with an average clearance time of 224 days for Aboriginal women and 205 days for non-Aboriginal women.

In 2013, Aboriginal women represented 4.3 percent of the overall female population. They were overrepresented in figures related to homicides, however, representing 16 percent of all homicide victims.

The New Democratic Party has promised to initiate an inquiry within 100 days of forming a government.

At a town hall hosted by VICE Canada in Toronto on Monday, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau reiterated his support for a government-funded inquiry.

"We need a national public inquiry into the tragedy that are the missing and murdered indigenous girls," he said. "We need to get justice for the victims. We need healing for the family. And we need to ensure as a society, as a country, that we stop this ongoing tragedy."

Trudeau criticized those who contend that such a public airing isn't necessary.

"That's almost worse. If people think they already know what the problem is, then why haven't they fixed it," said Trudeau. "I think we actually still need to dig into the reasons behind this and how we're going to move forward and how we're going to prevent this from continuing to happen."

In May 2014, UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples James Anaya released a report, calling the government's efforts to address problems faced by indigenous people "insufficient."

He echoed calls from Canadian politicians, native groups, and other UN members, urging the Harper government to launch a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Direct Link: <https://news.vice.com/article/harper-again-rejects-call-for-inquiry-into-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-in-canada>

Harper wrong to 'relegate' issue missing, murdered aboriginal women to matter of law and order: Wynne

[Ashley Csanady](#) | October 7, 2015 5:27 PM ET



Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, right, shakes hands with Michele Taina Audette of the Native Women's Association of Canada after speaking to the media following a meeting between the Premiers and National Aboriginal Organizations Leaders in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Wednesday, July 24, 2013. Wynne has been calling for an inquiry ever since.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne says Prime Minister Stephen Harper is wrong to “relegate” the calls for a missing, murdered indigenous women’s inquiry as a law and order issue.



Nathan Denette / The Canadian Press Conservative Leader Stephen Harper talks with mothers and their children after speaking during a campaign stop in Saskatoon, Sask, on Wednesday, October 7, 2015.

Wynne has long been a vocal proponent of the need for a national inquiry into the hundreds of aboriginal women who’ve disappeared or been murdered in recent decades. A former minister of aboriginal affairs, Wynne began using her platform to raise awareness of the issue soon after becoming premier in 2013.

“There is much more to it than an issue of law and order,” Wynne said Wednesday. “I think the deeply often destructive, relationship between First Nation peoples and non-aboriginal people is something that we have to acknowledge. The whole Truth and Reconciliation Commission was about how we change the relationship that we have with first nations people in this country.

“So I think to relegate the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women to a very narrow law-and-order focus is wrong.”

Harper, a day earlier on the campaign trail, said it’s “way past time” to study the issue. He also said “most of the cases” involving aboriginal women have been solved and his government’s tough-on-crime legislation is intended to better protect all women.

“Our government position on this has been very clear. We have moved forward with a whole series of criminal justice reforms to deal with the problems of violence against people generally, violence against women in particular,” Harper said during a campaign stop. “Most of these murders, sad as they are, are in fact solved.”

Wynne said that approach oversimplifies a complex issue.

“I think that it’s misguided,” Wynne said. I think that, until as a country, and as governments, every level of government, until we recognize that it is our responsibility to work in partnership (with aboriginal communities) ... then we are not able to say that we are an inclusive and multicultural and pluralistic society that lives in harmony with each other.”



The Canadian Press Tina Fontaine, centre, attends a vigil for her murdered daughter Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2014. The teen's death renewed calls for a public inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women.

Her comments come at the same time as a Saskatchewan senator is urging the RCMP to release its data to back up both the force and now Harper’s claim most cases have been solved. They also come a day after Tory MP Jack Cummins said the aboriginal victims “put themselves at risk.”

Senator Lillian Dyck, wants to see the numbers that prove RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson's claim 70 per cent of aboriginal women killed were victims of other aboriginal persons.

"I don't think it's true, someone should challenge them to release that data," she said this week from Saskatoon, which she was visiting for a panel on missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Earlier this year, Paulson made the claim in a letter to Chief Bernice Martial of Cold Lake First Nation in Alberta. He cited data from 300 contributing police agencies and said they "confirmed that 70 per cent of the offenders were of aboriginal origin."

Dyck also wondered aloud whether the RCMP only released the information at the Conservative government's behest, to back up their claims an inquiry is unnecessary. She also said that very lack of information and transparency is precisely why such an inquest would be beneficial.

"Two of the biggest factors are racism and sexism which we don't really talk about," Dyck said. "You mix sexism and racism together then you have a potent cocktail that makes aboriginal women and girls vulnerable so mostly men feel they can pick on them, assault them and make sexual advances."

— *with files from the Canadian Press*

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-politics/harper-wrong-to-relegate-issue-missing-murdered-aboriginal-woman-to-matter-of-law-and-order-wynne>

RCMP should provide data proving culpability of aboriginal men: Senator

THE CANADIAN PRESS

First posted: Tuesday, October 06, 2015 10:30 PM EDT | Updated: Tuesday, October 06, 2015 10:40 PM EDT



SASKATOON -- A Saskatchewan senator is challenging the RCMP and the federal government to release statistics proving that 70% of aboriginal females killed in cases solved by police have died at the hands of other aboriginals.

Lillian Dyck, who was in Saskatoon for a panel on missing and murdered aboriginal women, says the RCMP has not released the data that backs up that conclusion.

RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson released the statistic earlier this year in a letter addressed to Chief Bernice Martial of Cold Lake First Nation in Alberta.

Martial had asked Paulson to verify the number, questioning whether the figure, earlier spoken of by Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt, was accurate.

Paulson said the data from nearly 300 contributing police agencies "has confirmed that 70% of the offenders were of aboriginal origin."

Dyck says she wonders if the federal government pressured the RCMP to back them up.

"I don't think it's true, someone should challenge them to release that data," she says.

Dyck says the lack of transparency is more reason to call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

She believes the situation stems from attitudes born in the residential school system that continue to linger.

"Two of the biggest factors are racism and sexism which we don't really talk about," Dyck says. "You mix sexism and racism together then you have a potent cocktail that makes aboriginal women and girls vulnerable so mostly men feel they can pick on them, assault them and make sexual advances."

Direct Link: <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/10/06/rcmp-should-provide-data-proving-culpability-of-aboriginal-men-senator>

Hamilton debate over missing, murdered indigenous women gets heated

'Re-electing the Conservatives means we don't get our inquiry:' David Christopherson, NDP

By Samantha Craggs, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 08, 2015 8:07 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 9:13 AM ET



From left: Marxist-Leninist Hamilton East-Stoney Creek candidate Wendall Fields, Liberal HESC candidate Bob Bratina, Liberal Hamilton Centre candidate Anne Tennier, HESC Green candidate Erin Davis, Hamilton Centre Green candidate Ute Schmid-Jones, Hamilton Centre Conservative candidate Yonatan Rozenszjn, moderator Cindy Sue Montana McCormack, Hamilton Centre NDP candidate David Christopherson and HESC NDP candidate Wayne Marston. (Samantha Craggs/CBC)

There are 1,181 cases of missing and murdered indigenous women across Canada right now. And on Wednesday, their deaths inspired heated debate among would-be MPs for two Hamilton ridings about whether the government should examine why.

Candidates for Hamilton Centre and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek fielded a question about a potential inquiry during a Hamilton Regional Indian Centre all-candidates meeting.

The answers inspired a square-off between Conservative candidate Yonatan Rozenszjn and candidates from the Liberal and New Democratic parties.

'Re-electing the Conservatives means we don't get our inquiry.' - *David Christopherson, NDP, Hamilton Centre*

Hamilton Centre NDP incumbent David Christopherson said his party would launch an inquiry. And he warned the audience of about 30 that another Harper government would mean saying goodbye to that.

"Reelecting the Conservatives means we don't get our inquiry," he said. "To reelect Harper and not have this inquiry is just going to create so much pressure in our country. I don't know where we go after that."

"We desperately need it. We desperately need it."

Rozenszjn, who's running in Hamilton Centre, referenced talking to aboriginal communities. But he said his party primarily sees the issue as one of being tough on crime.

'Everyone else in the room has different ideas on how to deal with crime.' - *Yonatan Rozenszjn, Conservative, Hamilton Centre*

"The prime minister has been very clear that the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is ultimately a crime issue, and the Conservative party is the only party that's been consistent in its approach to dealing with crime," he said.

Missing and murdered women is a criminal issue, candidate says

"Everyone else in the room has different ideas on how to deal with crime. When we see someone acting inappropriately, we have to stop them and we have to make sure they don't do it again."

Wayne Marston, NDP incumbent in Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, called Rozenszjn's answer "a lecture." And Anne Tennier, the normally calm Liberal candidate for Hamilton Centre, rose to her feet.

"Just having a conversation is not an inquiry," she said as the NDP candidate nodded. "I take offence to that kind of talk, to think we're just going to sit around and have a little fireside chat. This isn't just a conversation."

'Just having a conversation is not an inquiry. I take offence to that kind of talk.' - Anne Tennier, Liberal, Hamilton Centre

Missing and murdered indigenous women was just one of the issues tackled during the event at Memorial school.

The first-time event was part of a broader effort to get First Nations people to vote, said Susan Barberstock, executive director of the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre.

Historic distrust with the voting process

Aboriginal voter turnout is historically low, she said. This is in part in recognition of First Nations sovereignty, she said. But it's also because until 1960, it meant surrendering one's status under the Indian Act. So voting still carries a stigma.



Cheyanne Herder, left, and Hohde Hawas Parent perform a song to close the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre all-candidates forum. (Samantha Craggs/CBC)

Three Hamilton-area aboriginal women have been murdered in recent memory, Barberstock said. So the notion of an inquiry hits home.

An inquiry would identify some of the underlying issues of why there is a disproportionate number of missing and murdered indigenous women, she said.

To the parties that promised an inquiry — which were the NDP, Liberals and Greens — "put your money where your mouth is," she said.

As for the Conservative stance, most of cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women remain unsolved, she said. "There needs to be an action plan to make sure there are arrests made."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/news/hamilton-debate-over-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-gets-heated-1.3261911>

Walking With Our Sisters memorial for murdered and missing indigenous women drawing crowds in Ottawa

Art installation open until Oct. 16 at Carleton University Art Gallery

By Waubgeshig Rice, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 07, 2015 1:39 PM ET Last Updated: Oct 08, 2015 12:04 PM ET



Many of the vamps in the installation have been hand-crafted by family members of women who have been murdered or disappeared.

A touring art memorial to missing and murdered indigenous women is drawing big crowds to the Carleton University Art Gallery.

Walking With Our Sisters is a commemorative installation that features nearly 2,000 pairs of handmade moccasin tops, or "vamps", to honour indigenous women, along with children and two-spirited people, who have been murdered or have disappeared in Canada.

"The vision for the vamps is they're unfinished," said volunteer and Carleton student Gabby Richichi-Fried. "Vamps usually get sewn into moccasins. But they're to symbolize lives that have been cut short."

The project began nearly five years ago, when Métis artist Christi Belcourt put a call out for family members of missing or murdered indigenous women to submit beaded or crafted moccasin tops in their memory.

The response was huge, and the memorial has toured Canada since late 2013.

"It travels in what we call a 'sacred bundle'," added Richichi-Fried. "This bundle travels all together, and it's consider sacred. It travels in ceremony always."

At the Carleton art gallery, the pieces are carefully laid out on red cloth with cedar, a traditional medicine in many indigenous cultures. The centrepiece is a canoe, an homage to the Algonquin people who traditionally travelled the rivers through what is now Ottawa.

Since opening here on Sept. 25, approximately 2,000 people have come to see the memorial, according to gallery director Sandra Dyck.

Juliana Matoush-Snowboy is one of the elders on hand helping out with the installation.

"I bring my daughters and my family to come in to look at the vamps, the memorial," she said. "It's a really, really awesome experience, yet tragic, in a sense."



From left to right, Juliana Matoush-Snowboy, Gabby Richichi-Fried, Brittany Mathews are all team members with Walking With Our Sisters Ottawa. (Waubgeshig Rice)

Matoush-Snowboy is originally from the Cree community of Mistissini in Quebec. Being a part of *Walking With Our Sisters* is a chance for her to honour one of her cousins, who was murdered in the 1970s.

"Back home on the rez, there's really nobody that honours her existence, basically," she said. "I want to fulfill that void that's been happening in our family."

The RCMP has counted nearly 1,200 indigenous women who have been murdered or have disappeared in Canada since 1980.

In Ottawa, community members, leaders, educators and family members of victims are lining up to see *Walking With Our Sisters*.

"It's been such an honour, ultimately, to provide a space for people, for families to come grieve, frankly," said volunteer Brittany Mathews, who is Métis.

"Yes, awareness is good, and yes awareness is amazing, but to me the most important healing needs to happen with families first."

"Anything that's spirit-driven is going to create an impact in history," added Matoush-Snowboy. "It's going to be something that'll be remembered and honoured, especially when it's done in such a beautiful manner."

Walking With Our Sisters runs until Oct. 16 at the Carleton University Art Gallery and then will head to nearby Akwesasne First Nation in early November.

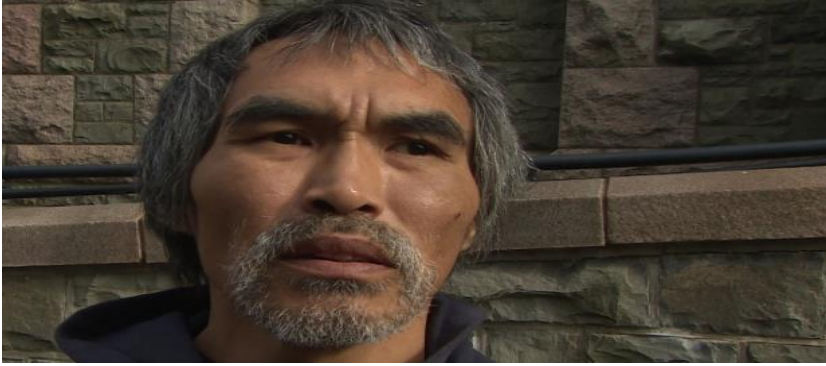
Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/walking-with-our-sisters-memorial-for-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women-drawing-crowds-in-ottawa-1.3260509>

Special Topic: Residential Schools & '60s Scoop

Strapped, bullied and sexually assaulted at residential school, ex-student testifies

Toby Obed says former students in North West River were scared of staff

[CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 05, 2015 12:50 PM NT Last Updated: Oct 05, 2015 4:33 PM NT



Toby Obed fought back tears as he told the court how staff would make students have sex on field trips and forced others to watch.

An Inuit man told a St. John's courtroom Monday that he never felt loved at the Labrador residential school he was forced to attend, and that punishment against Inuit students was very common.

Toby Obed said students at the North West River school were also bullied and taunted but staff did nothing to protect them.

"We were scared of staff. They could do or say anything at anytime," Obed sobbed as he testified during a class action lawsuit at Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Obed fought back tears as he told the court how staff would make students have sex on field trips and forced others to watch.

Obed cried out that he was sexually assaulted at the age of seven by an older child who was at the junior dormitory in North West River.



Dozens of former Newfoundland and Labrador residential school students who claim they were abused at the schools are set to testify at Supreme Court. (CBC)

Obed is one of more than 1,000 former Newfoundland and Labrador residential school students seeking apology and compensation in a class action suit that started last week. He is the first of dozens of former students who are expected to testify.

Lawyers for the students told the court that the former residents will be made to re-live all of the painful abuse they suffered.

Not allowed to attend funerals

Obed said he was taken from his family before he was four years old and sent to dormitory in North West River, in central Labrador.

He told the court how he was kept from his parents, and that when he was told they had died in the 1980s, he was not allowed to attend the funerals.

Obed said he remembers students being strapped for speaking Inuktitut. He was strapped many times on the back of his hands, and said if he cried or moved, he would be strapped again.

His sister was once fluent in the Inuit language but Obed said she has lost it because she was forbidden to speak it.

"She forgot, she forgot," said Obed. "It's not right."

At one point Monday, the court was forced to take a break when Obed was unable to contain his emotions.

He said he didn't want to continue on the stand, but did, adding that he was speaking for all the people who can't.

When testimony resumed, Obed said children who wet their beds were forced to stay there all day, and were not allowed to speak to anyone.

Under cross-examination, Obed was questioned by lawyers for both the Government of Canada and the International Grenfell Association, who asked about the punishment that students received.

Obed replied giving names of teachers and staff that he remembered were responsible.

The International Grenfell Association lawyer tried to establish that its members were unaware of any abuse that Obed suffered.

A lawyer for the federal government asked Obed if he thought the government knew what was happening to him.

"No," Obed replied.

Obed said testifying was very painful but he is relieved that it is over. Obed hopes this class-action suit will result in an apology for the Newfoundland and Labrador survivors, similar to apologies given to other former residential school students across Canada.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/residential-school-lawsuit-toby-obed-1.3256895>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Marijuana Goes Native American And Tax Free



[Robert W. Wood](#) ,Contributor

Oct 1, 2015 @ 08:50 AM **1,331** views

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

Native American tribes are poised to move into the lucrative legal marijuana businesses. As a sovereign nation, a [Native American tribe can open a marijuana resort even in a state where pot is illegal](#). With spreading legalization and taxes being levied right and left, tribal tax advantages could also be huge. A Native American tribe in South Dakota [plans to grow and sell marijuana despite state law](#), benefiting from a 2014 [Justice Department decision](#) stopping U.S. attorneys from prosecuting Native American tribes that grow and sell pot on reservations.

The [Associated Press](#) says that the Santee Sioux tribe is the first to grow and sell marijuana in an integrated operation. The small tribe of 400 hopes to use the profits for housing, a clinic, and addiction treatment. President Obama will surely not change his Justice Department's rule, yet the [feds did raid one Native American reservation](#) in July. The situation could be much dicier after the 2016 election.



Any other new President—particularly a Republican—may not be so understanding. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has [stated](#) that he will enforce the federal laws against marijuana if he is elected. He has also called taxes from marijuana ‘blood money.’ Yet tribal laws and the sovereign status of tribes is significant. Take gaming.

In 1987’s [California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians](#), the Supreme Court ruled that in states permitting gaming, tribes can conduct gaming on Native American lands unhindered by state regulation. A year later, Congress enacted the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, creating a regulatory framework for gaming on Indian lands. Today, Native American tribes are looking to expand beyond casinos into marijuana, now legal in 4 states, and legal for medical use in 23.

As governments try to exact on taxes to cash in, the idea of a tax-free ticket to the industry is not lost on Native Americans. Some tribes are considering changes to tribal laws as well as looking at commercial opportunities. California’s Pinoleville Pomo Nation was poised as the [first tribe to grow medical marijuana](#). Federal law still outlaws marijuana, and this too could give Native American tribes big advantages. The Department of Justice has taken notice, issuing [a memorandum](#) that reviewed their policy on marijuana issues as they relate to Native American tribes.

Yet some tribes could move in big just as they did with casinos. Native American tribes are looking at new sources of income. According to the National Indian Gaming Commission, [gaming revenues barely grew](#) from \$27.9 billion in 2012 to \$28 billion in 2013. Gaming on Native American lands earned \$26.5 billion in 2011. 236 Native American tribes operate 422 facilities across 28 states.

Native American tribes and their wholly owned tribal corporations are not subject to federal income taxes on their earnings. Some types of tax-exempt organizations are taxed on some types of income. Tribes are exempt from federal income taxes even when conducting commercial activities. They can form corporations to conduct business and their income remains exempt. Native Americans are U.S. citizens, and unlike their tribes, individuals *are* subject to federal income taxes.

Even exempt tribal income can be taxed when distributed to individual members of the tribe. One of the more complicated provisions of IGRA permits Native American tribes

to make per capita distributions of revenue from gaming activities to tribe members. These per capita distributions are taxed. Some “general welfare” payments to individuals under social benefit programs are *not* taxed.

In general, to be tax-free, payments must be made under a governmental program; be for the promotion of general welfare (*i.e.*, based generally on individual, family or other needs); and not be compensation for services. This General Welfare Exception from income has become increasingly controversial as applied to tribal members and the IRS is being asked to weigh in.

Absent an express authorization from Congress, states do not have the power to tax Native Americans living on a reservation whose income is derived from reservation sources. However, a state *may* tax Native Americans on income (including wages from tribal employment) if they reside in the state but outside the reservation. As with many other tax rules, these rules are becoming more controversial. Expect renewed discussion of these rules and their limits in the future.

Direct Link: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwood/2015/10/01/marijuana-goes-native-american-and-tax-free/>

Amid Questions, Dartmouth Native American Director off Job

By The Associated Press

HANOVER, N.H. — Oct 1, 2015, 8:57 PM ET

Dartmouth College has removed the new director of its Native American program from her position amid questions about her ancestry and tribal affiliation.

The Hanover, [New Hampshire](#), Ivy League college says the distraction surrounding Susan Taffe (taf) Reed's hiring last month was preventing her from effectively doing her job.

Reed remains an employee. A college spokeswoman says officials are exploring ways she can contribute to the campus.

Reed is president of a nonprofit organization called Eastern [Delaware](#) Nation. She has said she's of mixed Native American and European ancestry.

Her critics say she has misrepresented her background and note she's not a member of a federally recognized tribe.

Her removal from the position was first reported by the Valley News (<http://bit.ly/1LUuzQS>).

Direct Link: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/amid-questions-dartmouth-native-american-director-off-job-34187278>

Houska: Jeb Bush Says Native Americans Aren't Offended: Next Time Ask Us First

[Tara Houska](#)

10/1/15

While public schools across the nation continue to open their eyes to the harms of Native American mascots, the Washington football team has remained steadfast in their caricaturing of Native Americans and use of a racial slur.

Two years ago, Dan Snyder [told USA Today](#), “NEVER. You can use caps,” when asked about renaming his team. Losing another lawsuit to Native Americans opposed to the name must have stung [last July](#).

In response to the hundreds of tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal members suing, protesting, and speaking out, Snyder waged an all-out PR campaign to garner support and show dissension among Native peoples.

The team’s Original Americans Foundation has set out across Indian country to address Snyder’s newfound interest in Native American affairs. Because if he can show “some” Native Americans are OK with a dictionary-defined racial slur, that will quell the [empirical evidence](#) demonstrating the harm of Native mascots on Native children’s self-esteem, right?

Hardly.

While Native American condemnation of a racial slur grows in volume, Jeb Bush, Republican presidential candidate, [defended the Washington team](#) to Sirius XM’s *The Arena* in a broadcast set to air Friday.

It was fairly unsurprising [to read of](#) Dan Snyder’s copy00,000 contribution to a pro-Bush super PAC, in light of his repeated attempts to buy Native American support for the Washington team.

“I don’t find it offensive. Native American tribes generally don’t find it offensive,” Bush told Sirius XM.

Oneida Nation's Change the Mascot campaign fired back, stating "...[Bush] somehow believes he speaks for Native Americans and can assert Native American people do not find this slur offensive. He clearly is missing something."

Wasting no time to point out the Republican party's struggles with issues concerning minorities, Democratic National Committee Chair Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz noted Bush's "shocking disregard for America's diverse society," and asserted that Bush's stance is "one of many reasons he will not earn the Native American vote. The team's name is a racial slur that perpetuates negative stereotypes of Native American people, and reduces proud cultures to an insulting caricature."

Over [one hundred tribes](#) representing nearly 1.5 million Native Americans have formally opposed the Washington team logo and moniker. Not one of the 567 federally-recognized tribes has given support. Mr. Bush might want to do a bit more outreach in Native America if he feels another urge to assert what we do or don't find offensive.



Tara Houska.

Tara Houska (Couchiching First Nation) is a tribal rights attorney in Washington, D.C., a founding member of [NotYourMascots.org](#), and an all-around rabble rouser. Follow her: [@zhaabowekwe](#).

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/10/01/houska-jeb-bush-says-native-americans-arent-offended-next-time-ask-us-first-161927>

A 'deal with the devil'? Native American tribes push for marijuana legalization

Two Wisconsin tribes, the Menominee and the Ho-Chunk, look to follow South Dakota's Flandreau Santee Sioux, seeing a potential revenue stream – but it could force them to cede some of their sovereignty to federal and local governments



The idea of legal marijuana has some Native American tribes seeing green – but will it cost them in the long run? Photograph: Brennan Linsley/AP

[Zoe Sullivan](#) in Madison, Wisconsin

Friday 2 October 2015 12.02 BST Last modified on Friday 2 October 2015 15.09 BST

With 23 US states having legalized marijuana in some form – [Oregon became the latest to permit](#) the sale of marijuana for recreational on Thursday – some Native American nations are now also considering the possibility of legalizing the plant, in some cases because it could represent a revenue stream.

Within the past few weeks, two Wisconsin nations, the [Menominee](#) and the [Ho-Chunk](#), have registered popular support for such a move, one through a referendum and the other when tribal members voted to adopt a resolution supporting legalization.

Marijuana is not legal in [Wisconsin](#) for any use. The relationship of Native American tribes to state and federal governments in the US is complex. Some tribes, such as the Ho-Chunk, are bound by state, federal and tribal law. Others, such as the Menominee, are bound only by federal and tribal law.

A [2014 memorandum from the US Justice Department](#) suggested that US attorneys – the chief federal law enforcement officers for each jurisdiction – have the discretion to decide whether to enforce federal drug laws in Indian country.

That document, however, leaves a great deal of room for interpretation, challenging Native governments to tread carefully as they move forward with any legalization processes.

In order to create functional marijuana projects, tribal governments would have to negotiate agreements with state and local authorities, since marijuana is still illegal under federal law.

“Tribes have to make some kind of deal with the devil,” said Gabe Galanda, a Seattle-based attorney focusing on Native American issues.

“Tribal sovereignty means that state and local government have no say in the regulation of on-reservation affairs. Tribes that seek local and, in turn, federal support must either in letter or in spirit cede sovereignty to state and local government,” Galanda said.

While the Wisconsin tribes are still in the early stages of determining whether to legalize marijuana, other nations, such as the Flandreau Santee Sioux of South Dakota, have already passed the legislation.

The South Dakota nation approved legalization in June although marijuana is not legal for any purpose in South Dakota.

Seth Pearman, the Santee Sioux's attorney, said that the tribe plans to open a distribution facility by the end of the year that will be open to tribal members and non-tribal members. "The tribe will get direct and immediate economic benefits from the sale of marijuana."

While Pearman declined to comment on the potential magnitude of these benefits, an article in the Cannabist quoted the tribe's president [estimating the income at \\$2m a month](#). The story describes the facility as a "marijuana resort" that will have a nightclub, bar and food service, and arcade games.

Pearman said that the Santee Sioux didn't consult with local authorities about their initiative, although they did communicate with the US attorney for the district of South Dakota. Asked about enforcement actions, Pearman said he did not expect any.

The tribe is not governed by [public law 280](#), which means that its territory is subject only to tribal law and federal law, not state jurisdiction.

Public law 280 grants states the ability to play a greater criminal justice role on Native American lands. It initially covered six states (Alaska, California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin) but other states were allowed to opt in. As a result, while tribal nations may be considered separate legal entities from the state in which their lands are located, public law 280 blurs these lines. Tribes such as the Menominee, which are not governed by this law, in theory relate directly to the federal government without the state as an interlocutor. In Wisconsin, the Menominee are the only tribe not subject to public law 280. The Ho-Chunk are, and as a result must consider their concurrent jurisdiction with state authorities in matters such as legalizing marijuana.

Asked about the possible reaction the Ho-Chunk nation might expect from Wisconsin authorities in the event that it did decide to move forward with legalization, the tribe's attorney general, Amanda White Eagle, was circumspect. "I don't want to speculate and prejudge anybody's reaction to this."

Wisconsin's attorney general, Brad Schimel, was equally cautious in his email response to inquiries from the Guardian on the issue of legalizing marijuana in Indian country.

"We continue to monitor the situation and we will continue our ongoing discussions with the tribes," he said.

In an August interview with the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, [Schimel was more blunt](#). “We would work to shut it down,” he said of marijuana activity on tribal lands, like the Ho-Chunk’s, subject to Wisconsin law. “We’re not going to sit back and let it happen.”

Yet even with the ambiguous memorandum suggesting that federal authorities need not investigate or prosecute marijuana-related activity on Native lands as long as it does not contribute to larger criminal issues, the Menominee are cautious.

Gary Besaw, tribal chairman of the Menominee nation, spoke with the Guardian in a phone interview shortly after a referendum on legalization.

The tribe voted in August on two questions related to legalizing marijuana for medicinal purposes and recreational use for individuals over the age of 21. Both passed, with the former winning 76.5% of the yes votes, and the latter 57.8%.

“I think the idea with any draft legislation, the proof is in the pudding,” Besaw said. “How we develop, control and monitor what goes forward really determines how the tribal membership views this and what happens with this. So we have to make sure that as we move forward that we examine all angles and really do our due diligence.”

Casinos and cannabis

At the start of the year, [Governor Scott Walker denied permission](#) to the Menominee to open a casino, which would have served the nation as an economic engine.

Walker cited the high cost of the project to taxpayers as his motivation for nixing the project, but other tribes with existing casinos, including the Ho-Chunk, also opposed the deal.

Both the Potawatomi and the Ho-Chunk are the beneficiaries of a pre-Walker era agreement that pledges to reimburse them if a competing casino results in a loss of revenue. The Menominee project, operated by another Native-owned business, Hard Rock International, would have been located on the former site of the Dairyland greyhound park.

According to a Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel report, following Walker’s decision, one of the opposing tribes, the Potawatomi, [paid the state government \\$25m](#) in owed casino fees, which they had been withholding since mid-2014 as a result of their objections to the Menominee project.

The move prompted tribal members to march to Madison during the cold month of February in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to convince the governor to change his mind.

Asked whether this decision had prompted the tribe to consider legalizing marijuana, tribal chairman Besaw said: “You know, some people tried to build a case that there is

some type of nexus there that is implicating Walker somehow, but the reality is that the governor denied the Kenosha Hard Rock casino, which would have brought much-needed revenue to the reservation and, quite frankly, to the whole north-east Wisconsin region.

“So the fact that he denied that and those revenues are not there, well, that doesn’t mean that we roll over and play dead. We still need revenue.”

Will marijuana ‘poison’ reservations?

Legalizing marijuana may offer tribes a way of diversifying their income streams, but given the [historic challenges](#) Native American communities have faced with alcohol, not everyone is convinced that legalizing marijuana is the best option.

Jerome Brooks Big John lives in northern Wisconsin on the Lac de Flambeau land of the Chippewa nation. He declined to express an opinion about the possibility that nearby nations might legalize cannabis, but he described the “war on drugs” that his community has declared as drug-related deaths have risen into the double digits in recent years.

“Right now we’ve banished over 80 people from our reservation,” he said. “They’re not coming back here. They were poisoning our reservation with drugs and preying on our youth and our young adults. They’re not welcome back here. We’ve had enough of it.”

For the Santee Sioux, on the other hand, Pearman said the income expected from marijuana sales would help fund treatment programs. “Some of the proceeds from the actual venture itself the tribe wants to use to fund and establish a tribally owned treatment center for some of the epidemics that we see in our area like alcoholism, addiction to prescription drugs, methamphetamines, and some of those current issues we’re dealing with.”

California’s Alturas and Pit River tribes, which were reportedly growing marijuana for medicinal purposes, were [raided by authorities](#) in July, but tribal members didn’t return calls from the Guardian on the matter.

For Galanda such raids represent one of the very real risks facing tribes that move forward with legalization. “Keep in mind some local law enforcement will not pause to ask whether they have any authority on tribal lands,” he said.

This, he said, could have far-reaching consequences. “That raises significant Indian sovereignty implications, potential civil rights violations for those individuals who will find themselves in the cross-hairs of non-tribal cops, and other profound legal consequences.”

Direct Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/oct/02/wisconsin-native-americans-legal-marijuana-menominee-ho-chunk>

Native American Youth Suicide Rates Are At Crisis Levels

The numbers are staggering.

[Anna Almendrala](#) Healthy Living Editor, Huffington Post

Posted: 10/02/2015 07:42 AM EDT | Edited: 10/02/2015 01:49 PM EDT



A stuffed bear is placed on a white picket fence on Monday, Nov. 19, 2012 in New Town, N.D.

Five years ago, psychiatrist R. Dale Walker was invited to a small Northern Plains reservation that had suffered 17 suicides in eight months. It was there, listening in a group therapy meeting, that he first heard the phrase "grieved out."

Walker, who specializes in American Indian psychiatric issues and is himself a Cherokee, felt overwhelmed at the toll that suicide was taking on reservations and Indian communities.

"One of the most difficult things to hear is when the community says, 'We can grieve no more. We're cried out. We just can't respond anymore to the problem,'" he said. "It really does have an impact."

Walker has become more attuned to this sense of being too exhausted to grieve with each new call to an American Indian community that is facing an unusually high rate of suicide.

Suicide looks very different in Native communities than it does in the general population. Nationally, suicide tends to skew middle-aged (and white); but among Native Americans, 40 percent of those who die by suicide are between the ages of [15 and 24](#). And among young adults ages 18 to 24, Native American have higher rates of suicide than any other ethnicity, and higher than the general population.

A new report, published by the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, highlights what Native American health experts have long known: [Suicide among Native youth is a crisis](#), and one that is not receiving the attention it needs.

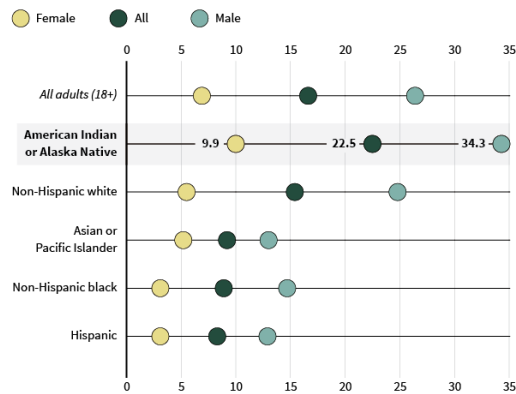
"We always focus on non-Hispanic white males in particular, because they do represent the vast bulk of the problem," lead researcher Arialdi Miniño, a statistician, told The Huffington Post. "But it seems to me that the American Indians are particularly vulnerable here as a group. I don't know if that is always represented and taken into account."

The report is also notable because it is not a typical analysis for the CDC. It was the passion project of two college-aged summer interns who wanted to investigate the suicide data for their age group, Miniño explained. In isolating this age group and deciding to include data on American Indians/Alaskan Natives (groups often left out of analyses because of the quality of the reporting), the team uncovered this unexpected disparity, which Miniño acknowledged as shocking.

Data on Native American deaths are inexact, he explained, because individuals who self-identify as Native American in one survey may not be listed as such on their death certificate. In other words, the numbers used in this report for Native American suicides likely undercount the actual figure.

Native Young Adults Are At The Greatest Risk

Completed suicides per 100,000 population, for 18-24-year-olds



Source: CDC

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Dana Alonzo, the director of the Suicide Prevention Research Program at Columbia University, hopes that the CDC will change its mind and continue its reporting on this age group.

"We've had very limited success in reducing the rate of suicides in the U.S. that occur each year," she said. "The better we can be at knowing who to target, the more likely we will be to have an impact."

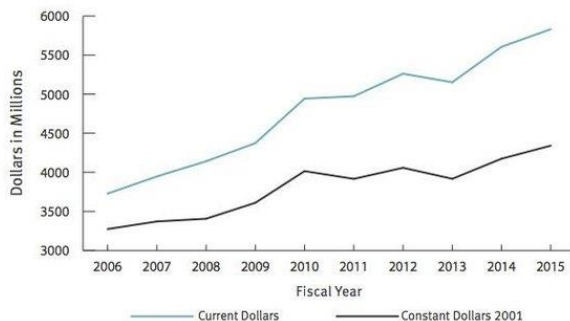
Walker, director of the [One Sky Center](#), a resource center for American Indian health, also praised the report, saying researchers need the most up-to-date information.

The youth suicide rate can vary wildly from one tribe to another. While some tribes may have a youth suicide rate three times the national average, another tribe's rate might be [ten times](#) the average, notes The Washington Post.

The causes of suicide are complex and include a range of factors, not all of which are always apparent. Mental illness plays a role in [almost 90 percent of suicides](#), according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and such conditions are often treatable. In the case of the AIAN community, [mental health resources are in short supply](#) and don't always reach them.

The Indian Health Services department, which delivers care to 2.2 million AIAN, continues to be underfunded. Its budget technically increased [56 percent from 2006 to 2015](#), but in constant 2001 dollars that's an increase of only 33 percent, the department reports. IHS' per-person spending is only about \$3,000, as compared to roughly [\\$8,000 spent on healthcare per person](#) by the general population.

These relatively small communities are also at much higher risk than the national average for other health issues: Native Americans are more likely to [die of alcohol-related causes](#), and the incidence of diabetes and tuberculosis are higher than average. As a group, they also have the highest rate of [intimate partner violence](#) in the U.S., while AIAN children are at [double the risk](#) for abuse and neglect.



The IHS budget from 2006 to 2015.

All these factors, including high rates of [poverty and unemployment](#), help foment a sense of loss and despair among Native youth, Walker said. And he suggested piecemeal intervention tactics to stop youth suicides just aren't going to cut it anymore.

American Indian communities are working to combat some of the contributing factors. This includes advocating for the power to prosecute non-Indians for crimes committed on a reservation ([crucial for domestic violence cases](#)) and confronting social forces like [bullying](#) and [sexual abuse](#). Evidence-based practices on this issue are still emerging.

Need help? In the U.S., call 1-800-273-8255 for the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#).

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/native-american-youth-suicide-rates-are-at-crisis-levels_560c3084e4b0768127005591

No, Native Americans aren't genetically more susceptible to alcoholism

Time to retire the 'firewater' fairytale

By [Maia Szalavitz](#)

on October 2, 2015 10:47 am

When Jessica Elm, a citizen of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, was studying for her master's degree in social work, she frequently heard about how genes were responsible for the high risk of alcoholism among American Indians. But her own family's experience — and the research, she discovered — tells a very different story.

The "firewater" fairytale that Elm came to know all too well goes like this: Europeans introduced Native Americans to alcohol, which they were genetically unprepared to handle. That happenstance led to alcoholism rates that are around twice as high as those seen in whites — and alcohol-related death rates, which are at least tripled. In this view, colonization didn't make conquered people susceptible to heavy drinking — genes did.

Addiction is often described as an equal-opportunity disease. It isn't: while anyone can become addicted under certain conditions, like most bullies, addiction prefers to hit people who are already hurting. The more trauma and social exclusion a child experiences, the greater the addiction risk. This creates a vicious cycle: addiction itself becomes a reason for even more rejection, prejudice, and maltreatment.

Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the shameful collection of stereotypes and stigmas surrounding alcoholism among American Indians. "Firewater" myths come from the racist ideology that fueled colonialism; they can be seen, for example, in a [letter](#) Thomas Jefferson wrote to a chief who led a native movement for abstinence. Jefferson argues that whites have only "sold what individuals wish to buy" and that "spirituous liquors are not in themselves bad ... But as you find that your people cannot refrain from an ill use of them, I greatly applaud your resolution not to use them at all."

The apogee of victim-blaming, the idea that genetic "inferiority" causes native peoples to be particularly susceptible to addiction was not falsifiable when it was initially spread. But even now that it has been disproven, the myth obscures the real causes of addiction and the starring roles that trauma and the multiple stresses of inequality can play in creating it.

"It's easier to pathologize people than it is to think critically," says Elm, now a PhD student at the University of Washington who studies how the health of Native Americans is affected by stress and generations of traumatic experience.

In fact, there's no evidence that Native Americans are more biologically susceptible to substance use disorders than any other group, says Joseph Gone, associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. American Indians don't metabolize or react to alcohol differently than whites do, and they don't have higher prevalence of any known risk genes.

There is no evidence that Native Americans are more biologically susceptible to substance use disorders than any other group. Rates of all types of addiction — not just alcohol — are elevated in aboriginal peoples around the world, not only in America. It's unlikely that these scattered groups randomly happen to share more vulnerability genes for addiction than any other similarly dispersed people. But what they clearly do have in common is an ongoing multi-generational experience of trauma.

The link between trauma and addiction is not in dispute — and the earlier the trauma, the worse the risk of addiction becomes. Whether it's losing a parent young, being emotionally, physically, or sexually violated, experiencing a natural or man-made disaster or witnessing violence, the risks add up. For example, [one study of nearly 10,000 people](#) found that those with four or more of these types of "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) have a risk of alcoholism that is seven times greater than those with none. Similarly, boys who have four or more ACEs are [nearly five times more likely](#) to inject drugs than those with none.

A quarter of Native Americans were separated from their parents, and often, their tribe early in life. American Indians are also much more likely than whites to have their families broken up by the state, which can propel trauma down the generations. Among older Indians, thousands were torn away from their parents and sent to abusive boarding schools whose explicit goal was cultural genocide: "Kill the Indian to save the man." In these schools, children were forbidden from using their own language and even their own names. Today, a full quarter of Native Americans either have personal boarding school experience or were adopted by whites — meaning they were separated from their parents and, often, from their tribe early in life, according to Elm.

Other evidence also shows that the introduction to alcohol by whites wasn't itself the cause of Indian drinking problems. Take, for instance, the historical case of one island tribe in Canada, cited by psychologist Bruce Alexander, the author of *The Globalization of Addiction*. The colonists who took over the island opposed drinking, so they didn't introduce alcohol. Its geographical isolation actually allowed successful prohibition. But this didn't prevent addiction-related destruction and despair. "Gambling became a problem," Alexander says, noting that the pastime had mainly been harmless before the colonists arrived.



Alexander is best known for his research showing that an enriched social and physical environment for rats ("[Rat Park](#)") dramatically reduced their risk of becoming addicted to morphine. When rats were kept in bare cages — the rodent equivalent of a life of solitary confinement — they readily lapped up solutions that contained morphine. But when they had toys, companions, mates, and room to run, even if they were first made physically dependent and taught that the drink would relieve withdrawal symptoms, they took far less than the isolated, caged rats did. Other rat research also shows that social stress — like being beaten in a fight by a dominant rat — doubles addiction risk for the defeated animal.

In humans, low socioeconomic status raises addiction risk even further. The media has recently focused relentlessly on the rise in middle class heroin and prescription drug addiction. But, in fact, heroin addiction rates are highest among the poor: the addiction rate for those making less than \$20,000 annually is triple that for those who make \$50,000 or more.

Heroin addiction rates are highest among the poor

In a state level study of prescription opioids, local poverty rates and levels of unemployment rose in tandem with drug problems: higher unemployment and more poverty were linked with higher rates of painkiller misuse, [according to a 2009 study in the *Journal of Addictive Disorders*](#). The same relationship holds true for low levels of education: people with less than a high school education are at much greater risk than those with college degrees.

Unemployment, too, is linked with a [doubling of addiction risk](#). That could be because people who are addicted are more likely to lose their jobs. However, studies that follow people over time show that unemployment itself, particularly long term, also increases drug consumption and addiction.

On average, American Indians have their life expectancy cut by four years compared to whites. In Indian country, every single one of these stressors is elevated. Over a quarter of Native Americans live in poverty, and the unemployment rate is double that for the [rest of the population](#). Research, in fact, links childhood adversity not just to addictions and other mental illnesses, but also to physical disease — including major killers like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Chronic stress matters because elevated levels of stress hormones can suppress the immune system and even damage brain cells. These effects are writ large among Native Americans. Diabetes rates are doubled; liver disease is

quintupled. Suicide rates are high. Indeed, the prevalence of major health problems is so high that on average, American Indians have their life expectancy [cut by four years compared to whites](#).

"Any kind of stressor affects your physiology," says Elm. "I'm from a Midwest tribe. For me personally, my aunt and uncle and mom — almost all of my [relatives] have some sort of early life diagnosis of disease. A lot of my cousins [have] lupus. There's a lot of auto immune disorders and diabetes."

To make matters worse, severe stress doesn't just affect one generation: it is passed down, both socially — affecting parenting — and physiologically, by actually changing how children's genes are read, which can alter both brain and body, a phenomenon known as epigenetics. Research on children of Holocaust survivors, for example, shows changes in reading instructions for genes related to stress.

Stress doesn't just affect one generation In Elm's case, her grandmother lost both of her parents very early in life — and she was left to raise her siblings, some of whom were taken from her and sent to Indian boarding schools. "I think the parents' grief and the children's grief was so tremendous," Elm says of the pain of both the separation and the abuse inflicted by the schools. "The children who went there never had parent role models," she adds, "They didn't know how to parent, even when they did their best."

Some researchers who study native health talk about such "historical trauma" as a major reason for lingering disparities. The University of Michigan's Gone, however, dislikes the term. "It pulls the eye away from present and settles it on the past," he says. Spotlighting horrors like Wounded Knee allows people to overlook the conditions of native communities today. It can also imply hopelessness about the future, emphasizing permanent damage, not the chance of recovery.

Gone cites a study published in 2010 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that clearly shows how much of a difference simply having more money can make. It followed a group of Cherokees who were part of a large research project on the development of addictions and other psychiatric disorders in rural and urban youth. Three years into the project, the families of the Indian children — but not those of other races — were given, on average, yearly payments of \$9,000 as part of a deal for a casino on their reservation.

A relatively small amount of money had a big impact That relatively small amount of money had a big impact. The younger a child was when their parents started receiving the money, the better they did and perhaps also importantly, parents' employment rates also increased. For example, 35 percent of those who were 16 when the parents began receiving payments developed problems with alcohol or other drugs — but only 23 percent of those who were 12 did. The 12-year-olds were the youngest studied, but other research suggests that younger kids might do even better.

When compared to white participants whose families didn't get payment — rather than to each other by age — the Cherokees also did better. Addiction rates were reduced by about one-third, in Indians compared to whites. Obviously, all of the Indians in the study had suffered significant "historical trauma" — but that didn't prevent them from being helped simply by becoming less poor.

Elm also points to projects that help Indians reconnect with their culture and traditions as a route to healing. She herself is learning her native language. "It's really helpful," she says, noting that the values of her people are embedded in its tongue and that the classes themselves connect her not only to her history, but to other members of the tribe in her class. Other researchers are studying how learning traditional drumming can help heal addiction and trauma.

If we want to prevent addiction and aid recovery, we need to focus more on stress, trauma, and poverty — things we can change — than on genes and history, which we cannot.

This report was supported by the journalism nonprofit the [Economic Hardship Reporting Project](#).

Direct Link: <http://www.theverge.com/2015/10/2/9428659/firewater-racist-myth-alcoholism-native-americans>

UAS student gov't votes to recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day

By [Lisa Phu, KTOO - Juneau](#) | October 1, 2015



University of Alaska Southeast (Photo by Lisa Phu/KTOO)

Students at the University of Alaska Southeast will recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day on Oct. 12, a day otherwise known as Columbus Day. The student government recently passed a resolution to do this on the second Monday of every October.

David Russell-Jensen is a third-year student at the [UAS](#). He's a member of the student government and cosponsored the resolution.

"I had an essay assigned to me in high school about whether or not we should even celebrate Columbus Day and so I think that's where some of my thoughts came about why we shouldn't celebrate it," Russell-Jensen said.

Growing up in Juneau, he said Columbus Day has never been a big deal. But he knows it's still recognized in other parts of the country.

"They do Columbus Day sales, I guess. That's kind of weird, but does that just mean you just walk into a store and just steal whatever you want?" he said.

For Russell-Jensen, Christopher Columbus represents the beginning of colonization and the genocide of indigenous people, not the discovery of America.

He got the idea to bring the resolution forward from Seattle. Its city council unanimously voted to [rename Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day](#) last year. Minneapolis did it beforehand. Berkeley, California has been recognizing it since the 1990s.

The State of Alaska and the university system do not recognize Columbus Day as an official holiday. But Russell-Jensen said we're all a result of colonization.

"We're all results of genocide and language loss. I mean, I'm speaking English. That's kind of weird. A hundred years ago, I'd probably be speaking three different languages if I lived here," Russell-Jensen said.

He hopes the resolution continues the dialogue UAS is already having. Russell-Jensen is a Tlingit language student and says the college is playing an important role in revitalizing Alaska Native languages.

"UAS is doing some really amazing things about the importance of indigenous languages and culture, so I know that this isn't going to be one day on the calendar, where, 'Oh, we're done.' It's not going to be like that," he said.

But Russell-Jensen still thinks UAS can do better. He wants to see more Alaska Native teachers. Of the 102 full-time faculty members at UAS, only 3 are Alaska Native.

Chancellor Rick Caulfield said that's something the college is focusing on through a new diversity action committee. He says UAS is continually looking at ways to expand educational opportunities around Alaska Native culture.

"It is something that I believe is important for all Alaskans and I think, to the extent that UAS is located in the homeland of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples ... we have an obligation to provide education to include the languages and cultures of the peoples in this ancestral homeland," Caulfield said.

UAS currently offers [Alaska Native Languages and Studies](#) as a minor or as an emphasis for a liberal arts degree. Caulfield says university faculty are discussing the possibility of turning it into its own degree program.

Direct Link: <http://www.alaskapublic.org/2015/10/01/uas-student-govt-votes-to-recognize-indigenous-peoples-day/>

Duluth vigil laments violence against Native American women

By [John Lundy](#) on Oct 2, 2015 at 9:30 p.m.

DULUTH, Minn. -- Calling violence against Native American women in the region unacceptable, about 70 people staged a vigil in Duluth on Friday.

"Our (Native American) women experience domestic violence at higher rates than any other population of people," said Janis Greene, director of the Dabino'Igan domestic violence shelter for women and children. "They experience sexual assault at three times the rate of other populations, domestic violence at 2½ times the rate of other people, and violent deaths at 10 times the rate of other people. Of those violent deaths, 70 percent of the perpetrators are non-Indian men."

The event at Trepanier Hall on West Second Street took place because October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Greene said. It also called attention to Sheila St. Clair, a 48-year-old Native American woman from Duluth who has been missing since Sept. 1.

Speakers also referred to other recent cases, such as the stabbing death in May of Lisa Jean Isham in Lincoln Park.

"For a community of this size, that's unacceptable," said Tina Olson, director of Duluth-based Mending the Sacred Hoop, a nonprofit that seeks to address and end violence against Native American women.

Olson, who was one of several speakers at the vigil, called for Duluth police to be more transparent about their investigations, including the search for St. Clair.

"Ask criminal justice, especially law enforcement, to be more accountable, to have more meetings with us," Olson said.

Olson appeared to be caught off guard when the next speaker, who was wearing a Texas Longhorns sweatshirt, identified herself as Kim Wick, a Duluth police investigator. But Wick quickly waved aside any apology.

"It's OK," Wick said. "We have to have difficult conversations. And if we don't, things aren't going to change."

Wick, whose responsibility with the department is cases involving missing persons, human trafficking and runaways, said she couldn't share details of the St. Clair investigation except to say that she's still missing. Wick asked for spiritual support.

"I think the biggest thing is that everybody pray together as a community," Wick said. "Not just for Sheila and her family -- because I know this is incredibly difficult for them - - but also for us to be able to get the leads that we need."

Wick encouraged audience members to contact police if they have any information.

But that requires surmounting long-established barriers, Greene said earlier.

"Part of the plight of Indian women is they're very invisible," she said. "They really tend to report (crimes) less, and that's because of a long history of barriers between institutionalized organizations and systems, such as police departments."

The vigil was preceded by a walk from the St. Louis County Courthouse to Trepanier Hall, with about 60 of the women, children and a few men participating. As they walked, they sang songs of solidarity and carried signs admonishing observers to "Remember My Name" and "Stop Violence Against Women."

Direct Link: <http://www.grandforksherald.com/news/region/3852783-duluth-vigil-laments-violence-against-native-american-women>

Daugaard seeks thorough investigation of how program to help Native Americans was run

October 02, 2015 10:00 pm • [Bob Mercer Journal correspondent](#)

PIERRE | A Rapid City member of the South Dakota Board of Education has resigned his seat, as Gov. Dennis Daugaard pursues answers about the management of GEAR UP, a statewide program designed to help Native American high school students.

Stacy Phelps, who has run GEAR UP since 1992 and been a Board of Education members since 2008, has left the board, Daugaard wrote in a letter to members of the South Dakota Legislature's watchdog panel, the Government Operations and Audit Committee.

The program is being examined because Mid Central Education Cooperative, the firm that distributed millions in federal money for GEAR UP activities, is under a cloud of

suspicion after an audit of its 2014 performance and an apparent multi-murder and suicide.

In his letter, Dugaard said he has asked South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley to look “for any evidence of wrongdoing in the administration of GEAR UP.”

“If there has been wrongdoing,” Dugaard wrote, “I want to find it.”

Mid Central, of Platte, S.D., has come under intense state scrutiny in the wake of a horrifying suspected crime. An investigation's preliminary finding is that Scott Westerhuis, the business manager at Mid Central, murdered his wife and four children in their Platte home, then torched the house and killed himself.

The crimes and fire took place just hours after South Dakota Education Secretary Melody Schopp notified a Mid Central executive by telephone that the company was losing its state contract to handle GEAR UP funds.

Members of the Legislature’s watchdog panel received a letter Friday from Dugaard regarding financial questions and the recent suspected killings and suicide.

Dugaard outlined to the legislators the actions and investigations involving various current and former officials at the state Education Department in Pierre and at Mid Central. Also under scrutiny are several nonprofits, consultants and Phelps, South Dakota GEAR UP program’s director at Rapid City.

The letter from Dugaard, dated Oct. 1, marks the governor’s first public statements about the matter.

He sent the letter to Rep. Dan Dryden, R-Rapid City, who is chairman of the Legislature’s Government Operations and Audit Committee.

The letter was forwarded to the other committee members Friday by the state Department of Legislative Audit.

Phelps' two roles weren't secret.

In 2008 Gov. Mike Rounds appointed Phelps to the state board. Rounds noted Phelps’ GEAR UP role.

Dugaard reappointed Phelps to the state board in 2013.

Business reports on public file with the South Dakota Secretary of State office show Phelps, Scott Westerhuis and his wife, Nicole Westerhuis, were involved together in several nonprofit and business ventures.

Daugaard said in his Oct. 1 letter that he appreciated the work Phelps has done with Native American students.

Daugaard then wrote that although the state board “has no role in awarding or oversight of SD DOE contracts or grants, Mr. Phelps’ continued position on that board would be a distraction from the important work the board performs, given his involvement with GEAR UP.”

An attempt Friday night to reach Phelps for a comment for this story was unsuccessful.

Daugaard has had a direct opportunity to know about the state Education Department’s activities.

As part of his work portfolio, Tony Venhuizen, who is the governor’s chief of staff and is married to one of Daugaard’s daughters, oversaw the department and Schopp.

Schopp delegated much of the department’s Native American education activities and their funding to Mid Central.

In 2012 Schopp appointed an oversight board for Native American education.

Among the members were Rick Melmer, a former state education secretary under Rounds.

Another was Keith Moore, the department’s first Native American education director, who was appointed under Rounds.

Schopp worked with both of them at the department.

An investigation is focused in large part on the handling of GEAR UP funds.

The state Department of Legislative Audit reviewed financial records of the state Education Department and Mid Central for fiscal 2014 involving GEAR UP and found various problems.

The state audit at that time didn’t reach down into nonprofits and consultants who received payments from GEAR UP funds, including Phelps’ GEAR UP office in Rapid City.

A more thorough review is underway.

One specific line of inquiry is whether people already on the Mid Central payroll or already receiving consulting fees for GEAR UP services also wrote GEAR UP grant reviews that were supposed to be independent.

Daugaard in the letter told legislators that Auditor General Marty Guindon agreed, at the governor's request, to deliver immediately to GOAC members the fiscal 2015 audit findings when the audit is done.

Guindon and his staff work for the Legislature and specifically GOAC.

Daugaard said those Legislative Audit findings are expected this month.

The GEAR UP program might be moved to the supervision of the state Board of Regents, according to the governor's letter.

The South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, of Rapid City for many years has hosted the summer GEAR UP camp for students. Daugaard said Black Hills State University might become involved in a partnership.

Heather A. Wilson, president of Mines, and Tom Jackson Jr., president of Black Hills State University, said in recent interviews they would be interested in working on such a partnership.

Daugaard said federal assistance has been requested for the transition from Mid Central.

Mid Central has contracted with accounting firm Eide Bailly to audit and review its operations in the wake of the Westerhuis family's deaths.

Schopp meanwhile directed her staff to conduct a risk assessment on all grants and contracts between the state department and Mid Central. Daugaard said Schopp will commission an audit and review of those relationships.

Daugaard outlined some steps he said Schopp had previously taken regarding financial accountability and management at Mid Central.

The state audit for 2014 found a general fault of the department's weak oversight of money flowing to and through Mid Central.

Schopp then assigned her department's financial director, Tamara Darnall, to oversee matters between the department and Mid Central.

Direct Link: http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/daugaard-seeks-thorough-investigation-of-how-program-to-help-native/article_50d3f873-c56f-5f26-9a96-c61ce0602977.html

Indigenous Peoples Day to celebrate Tucson's Native American community

By [Andy Alvarado](#) | Published 10/03/15 12:10pm

The UA is gearing up for its upcoming Indigenous Peoples Day celebration to be held on Oct. 12 and 13. The university is partnering with many individuals and organizations around Tucson who are hosting events throughout the two days.

Indigenous Peoples Day, which has recently been officially recognized by South Tucson, coincides with Columbus Day. Gabriela Maya Bernadett, a Native American and administrative associate at the UA Office of Tribal Relations, is responsible for organizing and leading the celebration at the UA.

According to Bernadett, the purpose of Indigenous Peoples Day is to be “a counter narrative to Columbus Day,” and “to recognize the strength and resilience of indigenous peoples in the face of colonization and imperialism.”

“So far, the response has been great,” Bernadett said. “We haven’t really had any opposition, not yet. Hopefully that keeps up.”

Opposition, Bernadett said, would consist of more conservative-leaning groups taking issue with the idea of a counter-celebration to that of Christopher Columbus. The celebration at the UA will focus on the resilience of indigenous and the preservations of their cultures.

The day was conceived at the University of California, Berkeley, which was the first place to officially recognize it as a counter-celebration on Columbus Day. From there, it gradually became recognized by other cities like San Diego and Denver, where it was celebrated more as a protest against Columbus Day.

Columbus Day is recognized as a federal holiday in the U.S., but is not observed as a state holiday by some states, according to The Week Magazine.

According to Pam Balogh, a Ph.D. student in Native American studies at the UA, protesting against Columbus Day is not the intention of this particular celebration.

“It’s more a reclaiming, not animosity,” Balogh said. “Columbus was this crown explorer to many people, and that’s fine, but it’s not fair to have just one narrative about this continent.”

Balogh said she hopes to see the day officially recognized by all of Tucson in the upcoming years and eventually the entirety of the U.S.

“I grew up in Payson [Ariz.] and a lot of Native Americans went to my school,” said Danny Kitts, a physiology senior at the UA. “They stick together and trust each other and I can totally see how it’s helped keep their culture alive.”

Kitts said he would like to attend the events, though he previously didn't know the day even existed, as is the case with other students around campus. Bernadett said she is hoping to change that this year by bringing awareness, appreciation and the celebration of indigenous people and their resilience to the UA.

Events begin on the morning of Monday, Oct. 12, with a breakfast hosted by the Native American Research and Training Center at 8 a.m.

At noon, students can catch performances by the Black Mountain Drum Group from the Tohono O'odham Nation, an Exhibition Jingle Dress Dance by Nyona Smith and a Northern Traditional Dance by Rayland Smith, also from Tohono O'odham. The Native American Law Student Association potluck at the College of Law courtyard will also be at noon.

There will be a discussion with Indigenous Alliance Without Borders at 5:30 p.m., hosted by the Adalberto and Ana Guerrero Center Student Lounge.

There will be a presentation by Michael Hawes, executive director of the Fulbright Foundation-Canada, in room 332A of the Harvill building, on Oct. 13, at 5:30 p.m.

"I'm glad [Native Americans] have a day of their own, like their own day to celebrate," Kitts said.

Direct Link: <http://www.wildcat.arizona.edu/article/2015/10/indigenous-peoples-day-to-celebrate-tucsos-native-american-community>

Talking Stick and Feather: Indigenous Tools Hold Sacred Power of Free Speech

[Joan Tavares Avant](#)

10/4/15

As Peace Makers in tribal court, it is ultimately important to follow the spirit of our ancestor's footsteps by using the Talking Stick or Talking Feather for better understanding the conversation of words shared by the circle of members and clients.

Like so, [Dr. Loretta Standley](#), Cherokee, mentions "that the art of Native communication style values cooperation over competition which reflects areas of their lifestyles. When engaging in conversation they listen intently generally looking down and do not focus on eye contact until the person speaking has finished."

Listening and understanding instills respect for those in attendance. As a result, at meetings or ceremonies, no one is left out of the process unless they have no comment. This methodology becomes a shared commitment. It is mentioned in my research that

oftentimes decisions are made on what we think we heard because more than one person may be speaking which can lead to a damaged decision. Passing a Talking Stick with everyone stating their name and reason why they have come, sets the circle for a well-intentioned meeting, even if it is for decision-making, brainstorming or conflict resolution.

These two time-honored tools were well thought out and created by indigenous leaders such as our Sachems, Medicine Men, Chiefs and Native women, of course.

“...I’ve listened to my spiritual leaders and learned when we were talking we had to give each other respect to listen and not comment on what the other person said unless asked...I believe this tool is a good influence because too many of us don’t get to speak about our feelings in a safe place. The talking stick is sacred to me”

—Anne Foxx, Mashpee Wampanoag-Peacemaker

Video of The Lesson of the Talking Stick

These are instruments of aboriginal democracy, which has been effective for generations in tribal circle meetings and tribal council.

[Dr. Carol Locust](#), member of the Eastern Band Cherokee, Native American Research and Training Center, in Tucson, said: “The Talking Stick has been used for centuries by many tribes as a means of just and impartial hearing. The Talking Stick was commonly used in council circles to decide who had the right to speak. When matters of great concern would come before the council, the leading elder would hold the Talking Stick, and begin the discussion. When he would finish what he had to say, he would hold out the Talking Stick and whoever would speak after him would take it. In this manner, the stick would be passed from one individual to another until all who wanted to speak had done so. The stick then was passed back to the elder for safe keeping.” (Locust, 1998) “The speaker should not forget that he carries within himself a sacred spark of the Great Spirit, and therefor he is also sacred. The eagle feather tied to the Talking Stick gives him the courage and wisdom to speak truthfully and wisely.”

Phyllis Cronbaugh, Cherokee/Navajo, author of “[The Talking Stick: Guarantee You are Understood and Not Just Heard](#)” (March 2010) further makes clear the use of the talking stick:

To clarify and establish relationship agreements,

To settle a dispute,

To bring mutual benefit and welfare,

To bring order to unfinished business,

To brainstorm for creative insight or to find solutions to a challenge,

To achieve a consensus within a group, or

To help structure a group into a cohesive team

Everyone is guaranteed to be understood and not just heard.

Sacred Talking Stick and Talking Feather have a variety of descriptions and decorations. They always depend on the carrier and tribe. For example, an Abenaki Talking Stick is a piece of sacred ash, (from the ash tree) with tips bent to form circles representing the Sacred Hoop. Besides other selected materials can be paint, carvings, or maybe buckskin. Your decorations are what items mean to you.

Video of Native American History: Talking Stick (Marcey) by Kathy Roberts
©GIFTOFSTRENGTH.com® Productions

Color Meanings When Making a Talking Stick and Talking Feather:

Blue: Intuition, Prayer, and Wisdom

Black: Clarity, Focus, Success, and Victory

Red: Life, Faith, and Happiness

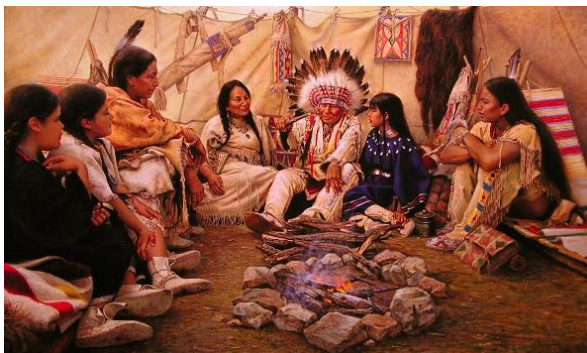
White: Sharing, Purity, Spirit, and Light

Yellow: Knowledge and Courage

Orange: Kinship, Intellect, and Determination

Green: Nature, Harmony, and Healing

Purple: Power, Mystery, and Magic



"When Grandfather Speaks" by Artist Alfredo Rodriguez. (American Gallery/Talking-Feather.com)

Tree and Wood Meanings

Birch: Truth, new beginnings and cleansing of the past

Cedar: Cleansing, protection, prosperity, and healing

Willow: Wisdom, an open mind, strength of age and experience

Oak: Strength of character, and courage

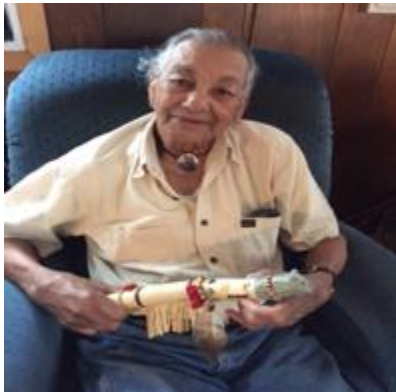
Cherry: Strong expression, rebirth, new awakenings and compassion

Pine: Creativity, peace, and harmony

Maple: The tree of offering, generosity, balance. and practically

The Talking Feather has its place in this story and is symbolic with the talking stick and has other Native honoring as well. Often times Mic-Macs carry a Talking Feather to remind them to speak gently. Still today, this is what's happening in a disrespectful request like in the "[Principal Tells Graduating Native to Hide Your Eagle Feather Under Your Gown.](#)" This young Native wanted to wear her gifted feather on her graduating hat tassel. She feels the directive was to hide her Native identity.

There are legends about how Talking Feather came to be. For example, read: "[Legend of the Talking Feather: Kanati and Asgaya Gigagei Bestow the Gift of the Talking Feather.](#)"



Chief Vernon Lopez "Silent Drum" with Talking Stick on June 28, 2015 (Photo courtesy Yvonne Avant)

Closer to home, Chief Silent Drum-Vernon Lopez, Mashpee Wampanoag shares the meaning of his talking stick below:

"The Talking Stick and Eagle Feather have been honored and carried by many Wampanoag leaders for a long time to control council meetings and sometimes for special gatherings of circle. You can design your own Talking Stick or feather by what it culturally means to you. My Talking Stick represents the Wolf who protects like our mothers do for their children and family. Beads at the top exemplify race of man and the

four directions. Eagle illustrates Grandfather Sky and Grandmother Moon. Green Tree reflects Mother Earth. Shells characterize our bays, oceans and rivers. Corn represents one of our Three Sisters (Corn, Beans and Squash) while my small Eagle Feather embodies spiritual value. The red mini tied bags are prayer bags to the Great Spirit.

At the bottom of my stick are purple and white beads that personify the color of our quahog shell, and to me mean love, peace and family. When we traded Wampum with the colonists the color purple was of more value. This special family Talking Stick is made from the willow tree and wrapped partly with leather. Most of our folks made their Talking Sticks out of some of our local wood such as willow, cedar or maple which makes it easier for carving.”



An example of a Talking Stick. (Photo courtesy Yvonne Avant)

The Sacred Feather was usually from the eagle, which represents truth, freedom, wisdom and keen insight, however some tribes believed in using the feather from the owl, which represents wisdom, protection, and strong insight into truth. This writer feels we should consider our turkey feathers, which bring peaceful attitudes, mainly in disputes. Turkeys and their little ones are living and walking all over Mashpee “Land of the Wampanoag” and have been forever.

John Peters, Slow Turtle-Supreme Medicine Man (1930-1979), left us with these words “*The Talking Circle is... a listening circle. The talking circle allows one person to talk at a time for as long as they need to talk. So much can be gained by listening. Is it a coincidence that the Creator gave us one mouth and two ears? The power of the circle allows the heat to be shared with each other. What we share with each other heals each other.*”

Joan Tavares Avant is the Deer Clan Mother of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. She is an elder, historian, and writer who works to promote accurate representation of her Mashpee Wampanoag culture and heritage.

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Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/10/04/talking-stick-and-feather-indigenous-tools-hold-sacred-power-free-speech-161911?nopaging=1>

Trump Just Added Another Notch To His Belt Of Anti-Native American Comments

by [Emily Atkin](#) Oct 5, 2015 12:52pm



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has opinions about sports teams.

Many Native Americans are “extremely proud” that the term “Redskins” is the name of Washington, D.C.’s football team, according to Donald Trump.

In remarks [reported by the New York Times](#) on Monday, the Republican presidential candidate said he [agreed with his rival Jeb Bush](#) that the NFL team should not change its controversial name, which is a [dictionary-defined racial slur](#).

“Honestly, I don’t think they should change the name, unless the owner wanted to,” he said. “I know Indians that are extremely proud of that name.”

The majority of American Indians find the name “Redskins” offensive, according to the [most recent polling](#). The 2014 poll from California State University, San Bernardino found that 67 percent of American Indians agreed that the term is “a racial or racist word and symbol,” while 12 percent were neutral and 20 percent disagreed.

Despite this and [acts of protest by native groups](#) across the country, team owner Dan Snyder has famously said [he’ll never change it](#).

Trump’s support for the name is not the first time he has [clashed with Native Americans](#).

Last month, the Republican front-runner expressed outrage over President Obama’s decision to restore Mount McKinley’s name back to Denali, its indigenous Alaskan name. Trump promised to reverse that decision if elected president, saying it was a “great insult to Ohio” that the Alaskan Mountain was no longer named after the Ohio-born former president, who [had never been to Alaska](#).

Trump also had a rocky relationship with Native American communities in upstate New York, because of their competing casino businesses. To discourage business in those Native-owned casinos, Trump funded ads that attempted to characterize the community as criminal drug users. “Are these the kind of neighbors we want?” [the ads asked](#), referring to Native Americans.

When those casinos began doing better than Trump’s, he became unhappy, and later accused the casino owners of not being authentic Native Americans during a Congressional Subcommittee Native American Affairs hearing.

“They don’t look like Indians to me,” [he said at the time](#), “and they don’t look like Indians to Indians.”

That comment drew “[gasps and puzzled looks of disbelief](#)” from the mostly-Native American audience in 1993. Now, Trump’s relationship with the community does not seem to be doing any better.

“It is hardly surprising that a candidate who labeled Mexican immigrants rapists and calls women ‘pigs’ now says he wants the NFL to continue slurring Native Americans,” said the group Change the Mascot, led by the National Congress of American Indians and the Oneida Indian Nation, in a statement. “Donald Trump joins some of the NFL’s ignoble fraternity of billionaires who sit in their office suites and owners boxes happily spending their fortunes denigrating people of color.”

Direct Link: <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2015/10/05/3709039/trump-redskins-anti-native-american/>

California doctor indicted in theft of Native American artifacts

By Tomas Monzon | Oct. 5, 2015 at 1:28 PM

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 5 (UPI) -- A Los Angeles anesthesiologist has been indicted on 21 felony charges related to the theft of Native American artifacts.

Jonathan Bourne's indictment is the result of an investigation prompted by August 2014 photos that appear to show him digging out a wooden bow from a melting glacier in the High Sierra.

U.S. Forest Service agents searched Bourne's High Sierra mansion and found nearly 30,000 ancient items from across 11,000 years of history, [according to the indictment](#), filed Sept. 17. Log books detailing the finds were also found.

The indictment identifies 32 confiscated items, including dart points, glass beads, cutting tools and three etched stone tablets.

The 21 charges against Bourne, 59, include unlawful transportation of archaeological resources, unauthorized excavation, removal, damage, defacement, injury to government property and possession of stolen government property.

Native American leaders have in the past complained about the unlawful removal of artifacts on tribal and public lands, saying it destroys culture and jeopardizes scientific data that can be used by archaeologists to better understand North America's earliest people.

Greg Harvestock, a U.S. Bureau of Land Management archaeologist involved in the case, [told the Los Angeles Times](#) that the theft is "a serious crime" and that "it damages archaeological records." He also said tribal members may describe "the removal of such items as sacrilegious."

Mark Coleman, one of Bourne's attorneys, said Bourne had spotted a piece of wood and extracted it so as to better preserve it in the event that it possessed historical significance.

If Bourne is convicted, he faces up to 98 years in prison in addition to the forfeiture of all vehicles and equipment used to procure the items. Federal prosecutors were expected to seek a sentence of less than 20 years.

Direct Link: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2015/10/05/California-doctor-allegedly-stole-Native-American-artifacts/9311444055567/

Respected OU Professor Named Chickasaw Nation Native American Law Chair

[ICTMN Staff](#)
10/5/15

The University of Oklahoma Board of Regents has named Dr. Lindsay Robertson the first Chickasaw Nation Native American Law Chair at the University of Oklahoma College of Law. For the first time at any law school in the United States, a Native American Law Chair position will be held by a permanent faculty member.

Dr. Robertson holds a Ph.D. in History in addition to his law degree and first began practicing Indian Law in Washington, D.C. in 1988. “My practice focus before that time had been business and commercial law,” said Robertson. “I think the combination of experiences made it easier to both understand historic issues and the modern business needs of my clients.”

In 1990, he was invited to teach Federal Indian Law at his alma mater, the University of Virginia School of Law, which he did for seven years while still practicing law.

“The combination of classroom and practice experience further enhanced my appreciation for the complexities of the field and the importance of understanding real world consequences,” said Robertson.

Dr. Robertson joined the faculty at the OU College of Law in 1997, and currently teaches courses in Federal Indian Law, Comparative and International Indigenous Peoples Law, Constitutional Law and Legal History. He also serves as faculty director of the Center for the Study of American Indian Law and Policy and founding director of the International Human Rights Law Clinic.

“I love teaching Federal Indian Law courses, including law and MLS courses, because I almost daily see the practical lessons being pulled from the course by students who are in the class to benefit their communities,” said Robertson.

In addition to having among the nation's most comprehensive Indian Law curricula, OU Law is at the forefront of curriculum development in International and Comparative Indigenous Peoples Law, including a seminar that is co-taught by Dr. Robertson with colleagues in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.



OU Law Logo

“Oklahoma is the historic Indian territory, and the home of almost 40 tribes,” said Robertson. “It's an incubator for creative practices in policy and tribal self-governance. I can't imagine working anywhere else.”

One example of innovation at the OU College of Law is the Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law program, which is an online program that offers a broad perspective on Native American law to non-lawyers or lawyers who wish to enhance their understanding of the field.

“The MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law program was designed to give a comprehensive training in Indigenous Peoples Law,” said Robertson. “The classes are taught by persons with decades of experience, all of whom have national reputations as leaders in their field.”

If you have an interest in Indigenous Peoples Law, it is worth considering the University of Oklahoma MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law program. This online graduate degree program provides a strong foundation in Native American Law for anyone who deals with contracts, negotiations or any other issues that demand knowledge of Native American policy, regulation or business practice.

“Despite the fact that it's an online program, faculty are accessible to all students,” said Robertson. “Many of our students are working full-time for tribes or non-tribal entities, and we made the courses asynchronous so that they can participate when it's convenient for them. We want all students to leave feeling they've learned a lot, and that the time and tuition were well-spent.”

When you're considering a graduate program, it is important to choose an area of study that interests you, a school that is well known in your specific area of interest, and a faculty that has experience both in the classroom and in the workforce.

All students completing the MLS in Indigenous Peoples Law program can expect to have a class with Dr. Robertson, among other distinguished faculty. Visit oulawonline.com for more information or to apply.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/10/05/respected-ou-professor-named-chickasaw-nation-native-american-law-chair-161946>

Businessman to plead guilty in tribal corruption case



23 hours ago • Associated Press

HELENA — A Havre businessman agreed to plead guilty to bribing a tribal official and conspiring to make false claims in order to take federal stimulus money awarded to the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation.

Defendant Shad Huston signed the plea deal on Friday, acknowledging that he bribed a Chippewa Cree official and used fake invoices to get paid for work his companies never did on the reservation.

The deal must be accepted by U.S. District Judge Brian Morris. A previous plea agreement fell through in March when Huston said prosecutors tried to punish him for crimes not included in the agreement.

If a judge accepts the latest deal, it would wrap up the two-year case that included five indictments against Huston. The maximum possible penalty is 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, though prosecutors agreed to recommend a lighter sentence, citing Huston's cooperation.

The charges center on allegations that tribal officials were given cash and gifts in return for lucrative contracts paid for with the federal aid and grant money given to the Chippewa Cree tribe.

The Chippewa Cree tribe received \$10.6 million in federal stimulus money between 2009 and 2011 for road construction and maintenance. Huston gave Timothy Rosette, the head of the tribe's roads department, cash in exchange for Rosette awarding contracts to Huston's companies, prosecutors said.

Huston presented \$120,000 worth of fake invoices for work that he claimed his trucking company did on the reservation, according to the indictment.

As part of the plea agreement, prosecutors agreed to dismiss two other indictments against Huston that included charges of bribery, embezzlement, theft and other crimes.

Huston had been charged with bribing former state Rep. Tony Belcourt, who was head of the Chippewa Cree Development Corp., and former tribal chairman Bruce Sunchild for consulting work and contracts after the tribe's health clinic was flooded in 2010.

The tribe had received \$25 million in insurance money and \$11.6 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency after the flooding.

Belcourt, Sunchild and Rosette are serving prison sentences after making plea agreements with prosecutors.

Huston previously pleaded guilty to an indictment for not reporting transactions when his money service business cashed checks of more than \$10,000 for the family members of Chippewa Cree tribal leaders implicated in the corruption investigation.

Read more: http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/businessman-to-plead-guilty-in-tribal-corruption-case/article_006f8b78-6867-547b-b934-6cf7441ad144.html#ixzz3noNuzMFh

Funding helps Native American abuse victims

Genie Hedlund, For Daily Herald Media 3:19 p.m. CDT October 5, 2015



Editor's note: Second in a weeklong series of guest columns marking October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women awarded Wisconsin Judicare Inc. a \$319,118 grant to fund its Native American Victims Holistic Legal Services Project for three years, from October 2013 through September 2016.

The project aims to provide low-income Native American survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking the civil legal representation they need and deserve. The project assists survivors with the immediate assistance they need for the safety of themselves and their families. It also seeks to empower survivors to rebuild their lives by intervening with a community legal services approach. This includes providing advice, brief service or direct legal representation in legal matters arising as a consequence of the abuse or violence, including injunction hearings, divorce, housing, employment and public benefit matters.

Wisconsin Judicare is now able to serve more Native Americans by increasing the financial eligibility limits from 125 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level; and expanding the case acceptance criteria from survivors of domestic abuse with evidence of recent physical abuse to include survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking with evidence of financial, psychological, emotional or verbal abuse.

The Violence Against Women project does not replace the legal services that Judicare has traditionally provided, but adds to them. Native American survivors continue to receive legal services through its Indian Law Office, Civil Unit staff attorneys and Private Attorney Involvement program. Judicare uses a number of funding sources in responding to a high demand for legal services, especially in the area of family law.

American Indians Against Abuse Inc., or AIAA, is our grant partner. Its mission is "to firmly address and promote elimination of violence and other abuses against American Indian women and within families and communities throughout the 11 Wisconsin tribes

by supporting culturally sensitive programming specific to traditional customs, values and teachings." AIAA generously shares its office on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation with Violence Against Women project advocate Susan Young, allowing Judicare to increase its presence in northwestern Wisconsin.

The project does not cover all cases. Legal Assistance to Victims funding cannot be used for: research projects; tort cases; child sexual abuse cases; cases involving the child protection system; victim service employee cases; criminal defense of victims charged with crimes; support of law reform initiatives; or the development of web sites or video production.

You may apply online at www.judicare.org; visit our office at 401 Fifth Street, Suite 200, Wausau, and complete a paper application; call us at 715-842-1681 or 800-472-1638; or contact Susan Young at 715-574-7266.

Some tribal domestic violence programs have the application forms for you to complete and mail to Wisconsin Judicare Inc., P.O. Box 6100, Wausau, WI 54402-6100.

After your application has been received, you may be contacted by phone or mail for additional information.

Genie Hedlund is a staff attorney for Wisconsin Judicare Inc. in Wausau. She can be reached at 715-842-1681 or ghedlund@judicare.org. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

Direct Link:

<http://www.wausadailyherald.com/story/news/local/2015/10/05/wisconsin-judicare-wins-grant-to-help-native-american-abuse-victims/73398996/>

Celebrating Native American Day's 25th Anniversary

Posted: 10/06/2015 12:27 pm EDT Updated: 5 hours ago

Notes from Indian Country

By Tim Giago (Nanwica Kciji), Founder, Native American Journalists Association

When Columbus Day comes around each year there is consternation in the Native American community across America. Columbus Day parades, particularly the one held in Denver, are disrupted by militant American Indians. On some Indian reservations

black armbands are worn to recognize what the indigenous people consider a "day of infamy."

But who would have "thunk" that in state Indian activists once called "The Mississippi of the North" we would be the only state in the Union that chose not celebrate Columbus Day.

How could such a state, condemned by activists for years, have risen above the fray and distinguished itself as a leader in white/Indian relations? The credit must go to the power of the Indian press. Here is how it happened.

In 1990 a young man named Birgil Kills Straight (that's right, Birgil with a B) decided to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Massacre at Wounded Knee by leading a contingent of Lakota riders on the trail that Sitanka (Big Foot) and his followers took on their way from the Cheyenne River Reservation to the Pine Ridge Reservation after hearing of the murder of Sitting Bull. The 7th Cavalry, George Armstrong Custer's old outfit, caught up with them at Wounded Knee Creek and on December 29, 1890, they opened fire on the mostly unarmed Lakota men, women and children, murdering nearly 300 innocent Lakota.

Kills Straight, a highly educated Lakota man, felt that this would be an opportune time to commemorate and honor the victims of the massacre. But he took it one step further and decided to hold a Lakota ceremony called, "Wiping away the tears." After the riders reached the sacred burial grounds of the victims at Wounded Knee the ceremony would be held to reach across the barriers of racial intolerance and in essence, extend a hand of peace and forgiveness to the white race.

I saw this as an opportunity to extend that same message in a column I wrote directed for then Governor George Mickelson (R-SD). I challenged him to use this commemoration to not only proclaim 1990 as a Year of Reconciliation between Indians and whites, but to also use it as a time to set aside Columbus Day and to rename that day Native American Day. Gov. Mickelson accepted my challenge in a letter to my newspaper, Indian Country Today. We had asked for a Year of Reconciliation, replacing Columbus Day with Native American Day, and joining the rest of America in honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Well, we ended up getting all three. The state legislature voted unanimously to make 1990 a Year of Reconciliation, to replace Columbus Day with Native American Day. They also made Martin Luther King's birthday a state holiday at the urging of a black man named Lynn Hart.

All of these things were accomplished without a single shot being fired, without a single arrest being made, without the occupation of a single building and without protesting and marching in the streets. They were accomplished because of the truth of an old adage, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

But it took a courageous governor and a strong and determined legislative body to stand behind Gov. Mickelson. South Dakota is the only state out of 50 that has moved to create

a state holiday to honor Native Americans. It is high time all South Dakotans use this holiday as a foundation to bring peace and unity between the races. For the first time let's truly celebrate Native American Day together. Come join us in the Native American Day Parade on Saturday, October 10 as we parade down the Main Street of Rapid City.

Tim Giago, an Oglala Lakota, was born, raised and educated on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. He was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard in the Class of 1991 and founder of Native Sun News and Indian Country Today newspapers. He founded and was the first president of the Native American Journalists Association. He can be reached at unitysodak1@vastbb.net.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tim-giago/celebrating-native-america_b_8252298.html

Wyoming Man Pleads Guilty In Shootings of Native American Men in What Victims' Families Are Calling a Hate Crime



Police officers surround Roy Clyde, who's accused of fatally shooting one man and injuring another

By Chris Harris

10/05/2015 AT 05:10 PM EDT

A Wyoming man who shot two Native American men, one fatally, in a crime that stoked racial tensions in a Wyoming town pleaded guilty last Thursday to charges that will keep him in prison for the rest of his life.

Roy Clyde, 32, pleaded guilty last Thursday to charges of first-degree murder and attempted murder under the terms of the deal. He will soon be sentenced to two consecutive life terms with no possibility for parole or gubernatorial intervention, prosecuting attorney Patrick LeBrun tells PEOPLE.



Roy Clyde

During a hearing last week, Clyde admitted in court to entering a detox center in Riverton, Wyoming, this summer and shooting two men as they slept. His crime fueled racial tensions, with the local Northern Arapaho Tribe [calling for the murder to be charged as a hate crime](#). Riverton, Wyoming, where the crime took place, borders the Wind River Reservation.

LeBrun says Clyde, a former city parks employee, told detectives soon after his arrest that he targeted the two men – 29-year-old Stallone Trosper and 50-year-old James Goggles – because he believed they were homeless. He allegedly expressed resentment over having to clean up after the homeless that often loiter in the parks within the reservation town's limits, LeBrun says.

In court last week, Clyde again testified that he singled the two men out because he thought they were transients.

But relatives of the two victims contend Clyde's actions were fueled by racial hatred, and that Trosper – who died from his injuries – and Goggles – who was shot in the head and continues his recovery – were targeted for being Native Americans.

When asked about Clyde's motives, LeBrun tells PEOPLE: "I can only tell you he said what he said, because I don't even want to try to get into that guy's mind. The victims' families don't believe that claim."

Direct Link: <http://www.people.com/article/wyoming-man-pleads-guilty-shooting-two-native-american-men>

Report: Native Americans in Arizona had nation's highest obesity rates

By Tom Blanton | [Cronkite News](#) | POSTED: Oct 5, 2015

WASHINGTON – Four of five adult Native Americans in Arizona were obese or overweight in 2013, the highest rate in the nation among states studied in a new report.

“The [State of Obesity 2015](#),” by the Trust for America’s Health, said 81 percent of Native Americans and Alaska Natives in Arizona were obese or overweight in 2013.

The report did not break out rates of those who were considered obese from those considered just overweight. By way of comparison, the report said the obesity and overweight rate for the overall population of Arizona was 64 percent in 2014.

Advocates said they were not surprised by the numbers, pointing to the unavailability of fresh and healthy food and a lack of access to health care services for many Native Americans in the state.

“The tribes are located in very remote parts of the state. It often takes up to one to two hours to get to a center” for health care, said Kristine FireThunder, director of the Arizona [Commission of Indian Affairs](#).

State of the nations

States with the highest and lowest reported overweight and obesity rates among American Indians and Alaska Natives in 2013, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Only 25 states were ranked.

1. Arizona: 81 percent obese or overweight **2.** North Carolina: 78.1 percent **3.** New Mexico: 77.5 percent **4.** Oklahoma: 76.6 percent **5.** California: 75.3 percent

21. Utah: 62.6 percent **22.** Ohio: 61.4 percent **23.** South Carolina: 60.1 percent **24.** Minnesota: 59.3 percent **25.** Texas: 51.6 percent

Data in the report came primarily from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. It involves “health-related telephone surveys that collect state data about U.S. residents regarding their health-related risk behaviors, chronic health conditions, and use of preventive services,” according to the agency’s website.

The report looked at all 50 states, but only included Native American data for 25 states because Indian populations in the other states were too small. Arizona had the highest rate of those states, while Texas was lowest among those 25 with an obesity and overweight rate of 51.6 percent.

Richard Hamburg, deputy director of [Trust for America’s Health](#), said the data on Native Americans and Alaska Natives paint a grim picture.

“The rates are significantly high on average,” Hamburg said of the Arizona numbers. “We need to fight this when kids are young.”

The ratings are based on body mass index, which is determined by dividing a person's weight by their height in inches squared, then multiplying that by 703. Anyone with a body mass index of 30 or more is considered obese, while those with a BMI from 25 to 29.9 are considered overweight, according to the report.

Native Americans are not alone in the trend toward obesity. Obesity rates nationally have more than doubled in the past 35 years, and the average American weighs over 24 pounds more than in 1960, according to the obesity report.

In Arizona, the obesity rate among the overall population has almost tripled since 1990, going from 10.6 percent to 28.9 percent in 2014, the report said.

A spokeswoman for Arizona's Department of Health Services said reducing obesity is a top priority for the state, and agreed with Hamburg that it's important to start the fight when people are young.

"If you can prevent it early, you're going to have fewer consequences," said Deborah Robinson, chief of the health department's community innovations office.

"It's one of our top priorities," she said. "Arizona as a whole is committed to reducing obesity."

Robinson pointed to "several different programs that try to make communities healthier" by encouraging people to exercise regularly and maintain healthier diets.

FireThunder said unhealthy diets played a large role in the high rate of weight issues among the 357,000 Native Americans who were living in the state in 2014, according to Census Bureau estimates.

Those unhealthy eating habits are the result of some communities abandoning "traditional culture and practices," including the cultivation of crops, she said. Nowadays, the laborious process of growing enough fruit, grains and vegetables to feed a community is often tossed aside in favor of processed foods.

"We have grocery stores for that," said FireThunder. "But the processed food, our bodies aren't meant to handle."

Direct Link: <https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2015/10/05/report-native-americans-in-arizona-had-nations-highest-obesity-rates/>

What we lose when we forget Native American history

BY [Corinne Segal](#) October 5, 2015 at 5:45 PM EDT

Video produced by Victoria Fleischer.

In 1862, [38 men of the Dakota Native American tribe](#) were hanged in what's been described as the largest mass execution in U.S. history. President Lincoln [ordered the killings](#) after the Santee Sioux uprising the previous summer left 490 white settlers dead.

Now, more than 150 years later, Lisa Yankton, a Minneapolis-based poet and member of the Dakota tribe, fears this history will be forgotten. So she's retelling it through her poetry.

The Dakota people still recognize the hangings each year, but the event is seldom discussed in wider U.S. culture, she said. "[It] is the largest mass hanging in the history of the United States and no one talks about it," she said.

She believes it is important for the Dakota to speak out about this history. "These are our stories and they need to be coming from our voices," she said. "We're the only ones who understand our own cultural system and our own cultural beliefs. And we're the only ones who know our own history and can tell it truthfully."

In addition to educating the public, sharing these stories helps the Dakota understand their own roots, she said: "To be a Dakota you must know the history of your people and what you've experienced, what you've been through. And we must never forget that because that composes who we are today. ... You have to understand where you're coming from in order to know where you're going."

Above, watch Yankton read her poem "Ma-Ka-To" at the 2015 AWP Conference and Bookfair in Minneapolis.

Ma-Ka-To

A while ago in Minnesota
Time before children and adult responsibility
An elder said to me
We are going to Ma-Ka-To for a pipe ceremony for the 38
We arrived in Ma-Ka-To
And went to a park
We climbed a snowy hill
Knee deep in snow
We stood in a circle on the sloped hill
There were fewer than a handful of us
Sage was lit and a sacred song was sung
The elder filled the sacred pipe and prayed
I was the only female
Too young to realize the significance of the event
However, my spirit knew and understood
The sacred pipe was smoked

An eagle arrived and circled overhead
This was a while ago
Before the park was renamed
Today, it is called the “Land of Memories Park”
Today there is a run starting Christmas Day midnight from
Ft. Snelling to Ma-Ka-To
Today there is a horse ride from South Dakota to Ma-Ka-To
Today there is a movie about the ride
But a while ago there was only a handful who stood on a snowy sloped hill

[Lisa Yankton](#) is a member of the Spirit Lake Dakota. During the Dakota Conflict, her grandmother fled from Minnesota to North Dakota with two children. She is a contributing writer to the Mystic Lake Declaration on Climate Change, a community editor with the [Saint Paul Almanac](#) and Haikus4Gambia Poet. Her community activities include coordinating the Dakota Conference, leading the Brooklyn Historical Society, teaching math at MCTC, and serving on the board of [The Circle Newspaper](#). She is a Fellow at The Creative Community Leadership Institute.

Direct Link: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/poetry/native-poets-lisa-yankton/>

Havre businessman to plead guilty in corruption case

The Associated Press 12:26 p.m. MDT October 5, 2015



HELENA (AP) — A Havre businessman agreed to plead guilty to bribing a tribal official and conspiring to make false claims in order to take federal stimulus money awarded to the Rocky Boy’s Indian Reservation.

Defendant Shad Huston signed the plea deal on Friday, acknowledging that he bribed a Chippewa Cree official and used fake invoices to get paid for work his companies never did on the reservation.

The deal must be accepted by U.S. District Judge Brian Morris. A previous plea agreement fell through in March when Huston said prosecutors tried to punish him for crimes not included in the agreement.

If a judge accepts the latest deal, it would wrap up the two-year case that included five indictments against Huston. The maximum possible penalty is 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, though prosecutors agreed to recommend a lighter sentence, citing Huston's cooperation.

The charges center on allegations that tribal officials were given cash and gifts in return for lucrative contracts paid for with the federal aid and grant money given to the Chippewa Cree tribe.

The Chippewa Cree tribe received \$10.6 million in federal stimulus money between 2009 and 2011 for road construction and maintenance. Huston gave Timothy Rosette, the head of the tribe's roads department, cash in exchange for Rosette awarding contracts to Huston's companies, prosecutors said.

Huston presented \$120,000 worth of fake invoices for work that he claimed his trucking company did on the reservation, according to the indictment.

As part of the plea agreement, prosecutors agreed to dismiss two other indictments against Huston that included charges of bribery, embezzlement, theft and other crimes.

Huston had been charged with bribing former state Rep. Tony Belcourt, who was head of the Chippewa Cree Development Corp., and former tribal chairman Bruce Sunchild for consulting work and contracts after the tribe's health clinic was flooded in 2010.

The tribe had received \$25 million in insurance money and \$11.6 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency after the flooding.

Belcourt, Sunchild and Rosette are serving prison sentences after making plea agreements with prosecutors.

Huston previously pleaded guilty to an indictment for not reporting transactions when his money service business cashed checks of more than \$10,000 for the family members of Chippewa Cree tribal leaders implicated in the corruption investigation.

Direct Link: <http://www.greatfallsribune.com/story/news/crime/2015/10/05/havre-businessman-plead-guilty-corruption-case/73391044/>

Santa Rosa Junior College to observe Indigenous People's Day on Columbus Day

BY JEREMY HAY

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

October 6, 2015, 1:27PM

Updated 42 minutes ago.

Monday will signal a new day for Santa Rosa Junior College, as it joins the schools and cities that have declared Indigenous People's Day is to be recognized on Columbus Day.

The action was driven by a resolution from the Student Government Assembly that SRJC President Frank Chong signed. The day is to be marked with a Monday ceremony.

The resolution — which touches on sensitive territory for those who find critical re-examinations of Christopher Columbus' historical role objectionable — is introduced by a paragraph that reads:

The student assembly "recognizes the importance of our indigenous roots. We see it to be the duty of educational institutions to promote the fearless discussion of uncomfortable truths.

"These truths include a discussion of the invasion, conquest, genocide and environmental destruction of native lands and indigenous peoples that still continues today."

"For indigenous people, it's definitely a huge step in the right direction" said Erika Hernandez Ramirez, the student government's vice president of committees. "It's to honor indigenous people and to tell the other side of the story that hasn't been told."

Chong sought to distinguish SRJC's action from the political movement behind the creation of Indigenous Peoples' Days elsewhere — including the city of Berkeley, at UC Berkeley, Stanford University and Sacramento State University. That movement says it is wrong to honor an explorer whose arrival on North America's shores ushered in the eventual destruction of much of Native American society.

"That wasn't the source of this whole conversation that I had with this whole group," he said. "It was, 'We want the indigenous people who live in this community to be recognized, to have a welcoming atmosphere,' to say 'We welcome more Native American students to come seek higher education.'"

SRJC does not otherwise observe Columbus Day, a federal holiday during which the campus remains open.

The designation of Indigenous People's Day is of a piece, Chong said, with the Pow Wow ceremony traditionally held for decades at the college's Day Under the Oaks event, and with meetings he has set with local tribal leaders to brainstorm ways to increase enrollment of Native Americans at SRJC.

“I didn’t want to make this an adversarial event,” he said. “I see this as an outreach event to indigenous people in Sonoma County and part of what we’re trying to do as a college.”

Direct Link: <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/4581099-181/santa-rosa-junior-college-to>

Experts: Native American remains found in West Sacramento

Skulls, bones discovered at construction site

UPDATED 7:52 PM PDT Oct 07, 2015

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. (KCRA) —Two skulls and some other bones found at a West Sacramento construction site are the remains of Native Americans who lived centuries ago, police said Wednesday.

A police spokesman said experts at Chico State University Human Identification Laboratory made the determination based on photographs of the skulls.

Sgt. Roger Kinney said the remains were first spotted by construction workers digging a 4-foot-deep trench near Blue Rock Street and Bayside Road.

"I guess the construction workers found the skull and they reported it to their supervisor," Kinney told reporters.

However, it was not until several hours later when a passer-by also spotted the remains that the discovery was reported to authorities and an investigation began into their origin.

"Right now the coroner just got on scene. And they believe they are two human skulls that they found. But they're still going to be turning over the dirt to see if they can find any additional bones or skulls," said Kinney.

Police put up yellow tape around the discovery site, but crews continued to use heavy equipment about 100 feet away.

According to the website of California Indian Legal Services, when potential Native American remains are found, the activity that led to the discovery should immediately stop.

Discovery Homes, based in Concord, is responsible for the housing development project.

John Willsie, legal counsel for the company, said a consulting archaeologist had determined that these are likely "isolated remains."

Willsie could not comment on why crews were continuing to work on the project.

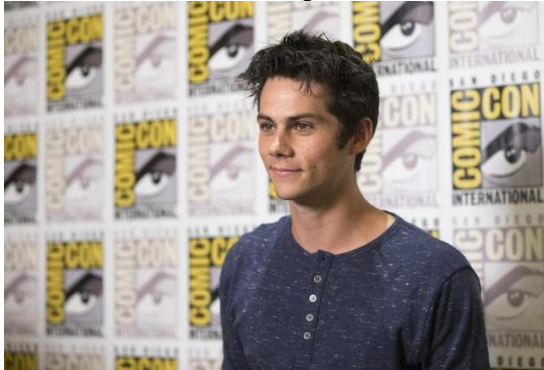
Kinney said California's Native American Heritage Commission will determine to which tribe the remains are most likely related.

The commission will then consult with tribe members about what to do with the remains.

Direct Link: <http://www.kcra.com/news/local-news/news-sacramento/police-human-remains-found-in-west-sacramento/35705580>

Native Americans protest 'Maze Runner' actor's comments

LOS ANGELES | By Daina Beth Solomon
Wed Oct 7, 2015 10:03pm EDT



Cast member Dylan O'Brien poses at a press line for "The Maze Runner" during the 2014 Comic-Con International Convention in San Diego, California July 25, 2014.
Reuters/Mario Anzuoni

An offhand comment made by "Maze Runner" actor Dylan O'Brien about filching Native American artifacts from a New Mexico ranch where a movie was being filmed has stung advocates who have long struggled to protect tribal items and remains.

O'Brien, 24, said in a recent interview that he had fallen ill during the shoot for 20th Century Fox's "The Maze Runner: Scorch Trials" and implied that a Native American curse had taken revenge on cast members who took objects.

The remark has prompted an online petition with 47,000 people calling for the return of any stolen objects from the ranch where the film was shot last year.

"It brings to mind for me that our graves that were robbed for the objects that were in them. That kind of desecration and direct continuing today is not deniable or tolerable," Jacqueline Johnson Pata, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, told Reuters on Wednesday.

O'Brien's publicist did not return a request for comment.

In an interview last month on U.S. syndicated morning talk show "Live with Kelly and Michael," O'Brien said he and fellow "Scorch Trials" cast members took items from the historic location where they filmed last winter.

"It was this ancient Indian burial ground, I guess," he said. "They were very strict about littering and don't take any artifacts like rocks, skulls — anything like that. And everyone just takes stuff, you know, obviously."

The site in question is the 22,000-acre Diamond Tail Ranch in the high desert between Santa Fe and Albuquerque. It is not home to any known Indian burial grounds, property manager Roch Hart told Reuters, and he has not been able to detect missing items.

Hart said artifacts at Diamond Tail include pottery shards and chippings of rock tools. While he has not been able to pinpoint specific tribes as the owners, he estimates that items date from the years 800 to 1700.

"Whether it be a thousand-dollar pot that was found, or a pottery shard ... we consider it all sacred," he said.

The ranch has hosted about 10 films in the past three years, including "Frontera" starring Ed Harris. If the theft allegations prove true, Hart said he will rethink plans.

20th Century Fox said Wednesday it was doing a "thorough investigation."

"If any artifacts were mishandled or removed from the location, we will do everything to ensure they are restored," the studio said in a statement.

Direct Link: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/08/us-film-mazerunner-artifacts-idUSKCN0S205D20151008>

Report: Native Americans in AZ have highest obesity rate in US

Posted: Oct 07, 2015 9:51 PM MST Updated: Oct 08, 2015 12:26 PM MST

By Colton Shone



(Source: Tucson News Now)

TUCSON, AZ (Tucson News Now) -

Native Americans in Arizona have the highest obesity rate in the country, according to a recent report, "State of Obesity 2015."

The findings also show that obesity is a growing problem in Arizona.

Doctors at the University of Arizona are working to fight the problem by establishing a center for obesity prevention.

However, health officials said it'll take a lot of work, especially in remote Native American communities.

Joe Begay has led quite a life.

"This is called *Tin Cup* with Kevin Costner. It's about golf," he said while showing a photo album filled with pictures of Hollywood actors who he has done scenes with.

Begay has played Native Americans in movies and shows filmed in Tucson for decades.

"My name was Dancing Hawk. I went to an Indian school. They taught me how to be an Indian," he recalled of one of his roles.

Retired for nearly 20 years, he now sells handmade jewelry at the Mission San Xavier del Bac.

A member of the Navajo tribe, Begay has family and friends in the reservations south of Tucson.

Many of them, he said, are dealing with health issues caused by weight.

"A long time ago they used to have traditional foods. Now the whole world changed around them, now we have all these McDonald's. You name it," he said.

According to the obesity report, four out of five Native American adults in Arizona are obese.

Health officials said limited access to fresh food and healthcare contribute to this problem.

"You know you often choose foods that make you feel good, and often times that's unhealthy foods. Certainly, all of America is doing that when you look at the income generation of fast foods," said Nicolette Teufel-Shone, Ph.D.

She's a professor and the section chair for the Family and Child Health Section at the University of Arizona.

The report also said Arizona's waistline is expanding. 64 percent of population is overweight. Nearly 29 percent is obese.

That number has tripled since 1990.

Begay, who is diabetic, said he hopes the younger generation of Native Americans find their way back to good health.

"I hope they don't get something like that, that's all I can say," he said.

Direct Link: <http://www.tucsonnewsnow.com/story/30212608/report-native-americans-in-az-have-highest-obesity-rate-in-us>

Portland joins Indigenous Peoples' Day movement

By [Andrew Theen | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

on October 08, 2015 at 5:02 PM, updated October 08, 2015 at 5:03 PM

Portland officially joined a growing movement Wednesday by formally recognizing the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples' Day.

The City Council voted unanimously to approve the resolution. The second Monday in October is historically celebrated as Columbus Day, a federal holiday. But as of next Monday, Portland will celebrate the people who called the state home for centuries.

"I'm just really overwhelmed by this first step," said Se-Ah-Dom Edmo, a Native American and Portland Human Rights commissioner whose family is from Celilo Village in the Columbia River Gorge.

Advocates of Native Americans have pushed the movement for nearly four decades.

President Franklin Roosevelt first recognized Columbus Day in 1937, and Richard Nixon made it a holiday in 1972. In 2010, the United Nations acknowledged the suffering and lost land and resources of Native people, according to a city statement.

Mayor Charlie Hales said Wednesday that Portlanders have a responsibility to "remember and to learn" about the region's history. "We can remember, we can repair, and we can respect," Hales said.



People lead a procession of tribal members before the kickoff for the newly opened Tilikum Crossing, a unique bridge, in Portland, Ore., Saturday, Sept. 12, 2015. The bridge is one that highlights green traits the city is known for: it's bike friendliness, light-rail and appeal to folks who like to walk. Buses will be allowed but not private cars. (AP Photo/Timothy J. Gonzalez)Timothy J. Gonzalez

Berkeley, California, was the first major U.S. to abandon Columbus Day, in 1992. Seattle and Minneapolis adopted similar resolutions in 2014.

In an email, Hales' spokeswoman Sara Hottman said city employees don't have the holiday off.

Portland has the ninth largest urban Native American population.

Reyn Leno, [chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde](#), said the community is elated.

He told the City Council that indigenous people took great honor in the naming of the Tilikum Bridge, and enjoyed last month's opening ceremony.

But Leno said more could be done. "You can't erase history and culture with a piece of paper and pencil," he said. "But you can do things like this."

Direct Link:

http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2015/10/portland_joins_indigenous_peop.html

Guyana government rushing water to indigenous communities whose wells, crops hit by dry spell

Published October 07, 2015

[Associated Press](#)

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#)

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – Officials in the South American country of Guyana are rushing water to parched areas as indigenous communities struggle with dry wells and withered crops.

The administration of President David Granger said Wednesday that it has sent a team to the sprawling southwestern Rupununi region to coordinate relief efforts.

The region where the indigenous Macushi and Patamona people live has been hit hard by a dry spell that began in August. Forecasters have said dry conditions will continue until at least mid-November.

Officials say the drought also has dried up parts of the Takutu River and prevented fish from spawning, raising concerns about upcoming food shortages.

Many parts of the Caribbean are struggling through one of the region's worst droughts in recent history.

Direct Link: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/10/07/guyana-government-rushing-water-to-indigenous-communities-whose-wells-crops-hit/>

Newstead prepares for its first Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday

Celebration of Native Americans, rather than Columbus, hailed



The designation of the second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples Day is “a great step forward,” says Rebecca Parker, who is active in her community. Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

By Barbara O’Brien

News Staff Reporter

on October 8, 2015 - 11:34 AM, updated October 8, 2015 at 11:37 AM

No one knows quite what to expect when the tiny community of Akron/Newstead makes history Monday with the celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day.

The schedule includes Native Americans saying their traditional Thanksgiving prayer, traditional singing and dancing, as well as an art show and, of course, speeches. The town also will unveil its new town seal, and traditional Native and American food will be served.

“A culture that has been here hundreds of years before us will be celebrated,” said Newstead Councilman Justin Rooney, who first proposed the day in Newstead.

That was the goal in May when the town unanimously designated the second Monday of October, otherwise known as Columbus Day, as Indigenous Peoples Day. It became one of the few communities in the nation recognizing the day.

The small rural community in the northeast corner of Erie County includes a portion of the Tonawanda Indian Reservation and is the first in the area, and perhaps the state, to designate a day to recognize the contributions of Native Americans. It joins Seattle and Minneapolis in designating Indigenous Peoples Day. South Dakota recognizes the second Monday in October as Native Americans Day, an official state holiday.

The Village of Akron and Akron Central School District did the same, and the village and town of Lewiston this fall also proclaimed Monday Indigenous Peoples Day.

“It’s really a great step forward, It has a lot to do with peace and friendship,” said Rebecca Parker, a Native American who is program director for health service needs for the Tonawanda Band of Senecas. “A lot of our history has not been told.”

Several hundred Native Americans from throughout the state and southern Ontario have been invited to the event.

The committee putting together the program sought art show submissions from residents on what Indigenous Peoples Day means to them, in recognition that not everyone will understand or endorse the day. The school district will recognize the Akron varsity lacrosse team, which won the Section 6 title and went on to state competition in the traditional native game.

“If we don’t consider everyone’s position in this, we are not going to achieve peace,” Parker said.

The Senecas are touched by the designation, and want to show appreciation to those who made it possible. Gary Parker will sing a song of honor in appreciation for the designation.

The arts and craft show opens at 10 a.m. Monday in Russell Park in Akron, where all events will take place. Opening remarks are scheduled for 10:30 a.m., and Seneca students will recite the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving address at 10:40 a.m. Presentations are scheduled at 11 a.m., followed by a Seneca speaker, lunch, singing and dancing. Closing remarks will be made at 1:45 p.m., followed by the Thanksgiving address.

“It’s been a learning experience for all of us,” Rooney said. “We really haven’t gotten a lot of traditional or honor songs. They haven’t gotten too many proclamations.”

“It’s an honor to be recognized, and we’re happy to share our culture with our neighbors,” Parker said. “It’s the biggest step we can make toward peace.”

Direct Link: <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/akron-newstead/newstead-prepares-for-its-first-indigenous-peoples-day-on-monday-20151008>

Pope Francis and Indigenous Peoples

[Steven Newcomb](#)

10/8/15

On September 22, Pope Francis’ jet touched down in the traditional territory of the Piskataway Nation (Washington, D.C.). From there he traveled to the traditional territory of the Lenape Nation (New York City and Philadelphia). The pope’s visit to North America has been celebrated by Catholics, and by those who admire his position on such

issues as climate change, poverty, gay rights, the need for corporate responsibility, and Vatican reform.

For those of us, however, who are from the original “Indian” nations of this western hemisphere, the pope’s visit raises the Catholic Church’s dark and complex history in relation to our nations and peoples. While visiting Bolivia in July, Pope Francis alluded to the Church’s checkered past with original peoples. In a statement of contrition, the pope said: “I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offenses of the church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America.”

The church’s offenses against Indigenous peoples are well illustrated by many documents the Holy See issued decades prior to and shortly after the first voyage of Christopher Columbus. Those documents declared war against non-Christians everywhere. In 1452, for example, Pope Nicholas V authorized King Alfonso V of Portugal to sail to Africa and to other non-Christian lands. The pope exhorted the Portuguese monarch “to invade, capture, vanquish, and subdue,” all “Saracens and pagans,” “to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery,” and “to take away all their possessions and property.”

A close reading of the Latin and English versions of papal documents issued during the fifteenth century reveals a key fact. The Catholic institution of the Holy See specifically authorized what Pope Francis has called “the so-called conquest of America.” In 1493, Pope Alexander VI called for “barbarous nations” to be dominated, by being “subjugated,” as part of the “propagation of the Christian empire” (“*imperii Christiani propagationem*”).

Pope Francis’s mention of the “offenses of the church” is taken to a deeper level when we read the Latin version of the *Inter Caetera* papal document of May 3, 1493. Pope Alexander VI put his apostolic power behind Spain’s proposal to “reduce” and “subject” non-Christian “islands and mainlands,” along with “their natives and inhabitants,” to Christian rule. Pope Alexander called the Spanish crown’s proposal to subject and reduce barbarous nations “sacred” and “praiseworthy.”

On September 24, The New York Times reported that Pope Francis praised the United States for “devotion to freedom of liberty and religion.” Clearly, the pontiff does not know that it took until 1978 for Congress to pass the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Such legislation was needed because of the legacy of the ancient Vatican papal bulls in U.S. law. That little known connection was made clear by Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story in his *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* (1833). Chapter One is titled, “Origin and Title to the Territories of the Colonies.” There, Story drew a direct connection between the Latin version of a 1493 papal bull and the 1823 U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Johnson & Graham’s Lessee v. M’Intosh*.

Paraphrasing *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, Story wrote: “The Papal authority, too, was brought in aid of these great designs [for Christian colonization]; and for the purpose of overthrowing heathenism, and propagating the Catholic religion, Alexander the Sixth, by

a Bull issued in 1493, granted to the crown of Castile the whole of the immense territory then discovered, or to be discovered...so far as it was not possessed by any Christian prince.”

Story then connected that papal language to “the right of discovery” expressed by his friend Chief Justice John Marshall in the *Johnson* ruling. To this day, the *Johnson* decision defines the original Indian land title of our nations as mere “occupancy” in U.S. law, subject to a claim of what Story called “absolute dominion” as “a right acquired by discovery.” In other words, the U.S. Supreme Court claimed that a “pretension” of Christian discovery of non-Christian lands resulted in the colonizers giving themselves a right of domination to and over the soil. The U.S. Justice Department made this very argument to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954, in the case *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. United States*. In its 1955 decision in *Tee-Hit-Ton*, the Supreme Court cited to Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law*, “The heathen nations of the other quarters of the globe were the lawful spoil and prey of their civilized conquerors.”

On Thursday, September 24, Pope Francis addressed both houses of the U.S. Congress, and, according to Tim Murphy at Mother Jones, Francis “took a step to acknowledge” the United States’ “(and the church’s) often horrific treatment of American Indians.” “Those first contacts were often turbulent and violent,” said the pope, “but it is difficult to judge the past by the criteria of the present.” Such language deftly side-steps the fact that Pope Francis’ predecessors issued papal documents which called for propagating Christian empire and domination against our nations and peoples in the name of evangelism.

Pope Francis and the U.S. Congress need to acknowledge that, in 2015, the dominating language of ancient papal documents serves to underpin U.S. federal Indian law and policy. That’s an ongoing manifestation of the “often horrific treatment” of our nations that the pope mentioned. It’s time for Pope Francis to seize the opportunity to fully acknowledge before the world, and then revoke, the papal documents of domination and dehumanization which have resulted in an ongoing legacy of injustice, dispossession, and trauma for our original nations and peoples.

Steven Newcomb (Shawnee, Lenape) is co-founder and co-director of the Indigenous Law Institute, and the author of Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, and co-producer of the documentary, The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/10/08/pope-francis-and-indigenous-peoples>

Why Is It So Hard for SA to Embrace Indigenous Peoples Day?

By [Mark Reagan @210reagan](#)



Antonio Diaz has worked for years to get county and city government to officially declare October 12 Indigenous Peoples Day.

For at least a decade, Antonio Diaz has been on a mission: to convince county and city government to declare October 12 — the day Christopher Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere, leading to mass murder, slavery and the near-extinction of Native Americans in North America — as Indigenous Peoples Day.

A fire has burned in Diaz's stomach since the '70s, when he became involved with the American Indian Movement advocacy group. His voice crescendos when he speaks about European immigrants who destroyed native culture and society throughout the Americas. Forgetting that brutal history — much less ignoring it — is not an option for Diaz.

"If I do that, I'm probably worse than the Conquistadors and am allowing what happened to my ancestors to go on," said Diaz, whose ancestry is a mixture of Indigenous and European. "I can't do that. I've gone too far in learning about myself and my culture."

His efforts to get local government to acknowledge that culture have repeatedly been swept under the rug, but this year, he thinks he may have a better chance. In July, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [granted the San Antonio Missions World Heritage status](#). Diaz hopes the City Council and County Commission will be more open toward creating a day to honor local Native Americans, since the inclusion of Indigenous history was vital to securing the prestigious designation. Not only that, the Bexar County Commissioner's Court voted this summer [to remove Confederate memorabilia from county property](#), with plans to move it to a museum.

"Then all this violence has been occurring, against the black and brown communities — or even the poor across the board, and it has sparked this interest of why [it happens]," Diaz said. "It is focused on racism. So it opens up those talks about race relations, which brings us, along with the black community, to the forefront again."

Diaz, who founded the Texas Indigenous Council and organizes the annual Indigenous Dignity Human Rights March (October 10), created a draft resolution that he submitted to county commissioners and council members earlier this summer.

The resolution declares October 12 — currently known as Columbus Day, a federal holiday — Indigenous Peoples Day in Bexar County. The resolution states that the Indigenous way of life was devastated on October 12, 1492, and it highlights the many contributions Native Americans have made to society. The resolution does not mention Columbus at all.

"We're amiable to changes, as long as the spirit remains," Diaz said. "Columbus is not a holiday that is celebrated in Texas. There is nothing to do away with, and there is nothing to replace."

There are scattered Columbus Day celebrations in San Antonio, but really, only federal workers get the day off.

Diaz said Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Calvert, whose office confirmed that Diaz approached Calvert about the resolution, will bring it to the commission on October 6.

Cavett McCrary, Calvert's executive assistant, said that Diaz and Calvert were working on a more refined version of the resolution, and that Calvert would comment when the language is hammered out. Calvert did not respond by deadline, but late Friday Diaz said he received the final copy, which he thought was gutted.

"The idea that this government represses Indigenous identity or can be told the truth about their glorification about their beginnings as an invading colonizing foreign force is intolerable," he said. "I hope the gutted resolution gets approved on the sixth. We need to have something to point at and move forward from, cause at this point we have nothing but shoeshine smiling faces."

Bexar County Commissioners Court [voted to pass the resolution on Tuesday](#).



A map of Mexico features both the original and commonly known names of some indigenous nations.

City Council members Rey Saldaña and Alan E. Warrick II have also been interested, according to Diaz. Warrick did not respond to a request for comment.

Saldaña, however, said his office will work with Diaz.

"I took the meeting, really, because Mr. Diaz has been so patient in his request. I've been on council for four years," Saldaña said, adding he's familiar with Diaz's efforts. "I'm convinced this is something that this council should consider. I don't believe it's outside the realm of possibility to get this done."

He told Diaz he wanted to speak with other council members to gauge support for the measure. Saldaña said he's so far spoken with Warrick and councilman Roberto C. Treviño, who said he's open to the idea as long as it doesn't exclude anyone, like the Christopher Columbus Italian Society. That organization did not respond to an inquiry left at the phone number listed on its website.



Dancers at Columbus Park during the 2010 Indigenous Rights March.

Saldaña said he thought drafting a resolution and getting City Council support before October 12 was too ambitious, but he committed to filing a council consideration request — the first step to bringing a resolution to City Council.

For Mario Salas, a longtime San Antonio activist, it's hard to understand what the hold-up is, describing the idea of an Indigenous Peoples Day as straightforward. Outside of cowardice or racism, the only plausible explanation is priorities, he said.

"People make up all kinds of excuses, like there is more important stuff to do [for the city and county]," Salas said. "Everyone has a lot of things to do, but this is an important thing to do as well."

Ramon Vasquez, executive director of the nonprofit American Indians In Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions, said San Antonio is a place of context.

"A lot of things happened here and we have a role in history and hope we will continue to make history, like some of the decisions the Commissioners Court has made, like the removal of Confederate symbols," Vasquez said.

The least local government can do is acknowledge Native American contributions to the city.



A map of Canada and the continental U.S. showing the pre-contact locations and names of Native American tribes.

"I feel like we've lacked [that], fallen short," he said. "We have a rich history that starts with the American Indians in founding San Antonio and to contributions being made today."

So why has it been so hard for Diaz to convince local leaders to designate October 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day?

"A lot of people do celebrate Columbus Day even knowing what we know today, we still celebrate it," Vasquez said. "Really, it was just the beginning of atrocities. I think over 50 million people lost their lives."

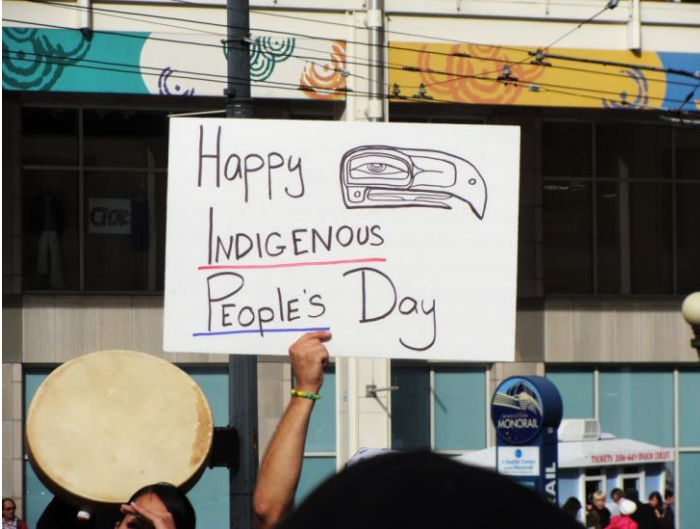
It would only take five people for Bexar County to declare October 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day and 11 to do the same in San Antonio — 10 council members and the mayor.

"I know it's going to be a hot topic and I know it is a hot topic, but this is not about, you know, one race of people over another — or ethnicity. This is just about doing the right thing," Vasquez said. "We have the opportunity to make things right. We can right wrongs now."

Direct Link: <http://www.sacurrent.com/sanantonio/why-it-is-so-hard-for-sa-to-embrace-indigenous-peoples-day/Content?oid=2475994>

Seattle replaces Columbus Day with 'Indigenous People's Day'

BY [Ayan Sheikh](#) *October 13, 2014 at 2:37 PM EDT*



Seattle has declared Columbus Day "Indigenous People's Day." Photo by Flickr user nicholasbross

Just a week after Seattle's City council unanimously approved replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day — [a holiday](#) that will honor and celebrate the cultural contributions of Native Americans — Mayor Ed Murray invited members of city council along with Native American tribal leaders to the signing ceremony on Monday afternoon.

Despite being a federal holiday, Washington is among several other states and cities that [no longer recognize Columbus Day](#) as a legal holiday.

In Hawaii for instance, "Discoverers' Day" has replaced Columbus Day. In South Dakota, ["Native Americans Day"](#) is celebrated on the second Monday of October.

In spite of the council's unanimous decision, the resolution garnered some opposition, particularly from an [Italian-American group](#) that says the city council's decision was an "example of this administration's overreach and excessive political correctness at the expense of everyday citizens."

Lisa Marchese, a lawyer affiliated with the Order Sons of Italy in America and the Italian-American Chamber of Commerce of the Pacific Northwest, [told the Seattle Times](#) that Italian-Americans feel slighted by the outcome.

"By this resolution you say to all Italian-Americans that the city of Seattle no longer deems your heritage or your community worthy of recognition."

Conversely, Seattle City Council member [Kshama Sawant told the Seattle Times](#), "learning about the history of Columbus and transforming this day into a celebration of

indigenous people and a celebration of social justice... allows us to make a connection between this painful history and the ongoing marginalization, discrimination and poverty that indigenous communities face to this day.”

Direct Link: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/seattle-replaces-columbus-day-indigenous-peoples-day/>

In Brazil, militias of indigenous people take up arms against illegal logging, but their tactics raise fears of greater violence

Story by [Dom Phillips](#)

Photos and Video by [Bonnie Jo Mount](#)

Published on October 6, 2015

In Arariboia Indigenous Land, Brazil

A beat-up sign on the edge of this Amazon reserve warns strangers not to enter. For years, loggers ignored it and barreled straight into the protected indigenous territory, cutting tracks ever deeper into the diminishing forest.

But on a recent day, visitors approaching Juçaral village, just inside the reserve, encountered an improvised checkpoint operated by a militia called the Guardians. Wearing disheveled uniforms and face paint, members of the 48-man militia sauntered out, shotguns in hand, to check every arriving vehicle.



These are the men and women defending their land in the Amazon rain forest from illegal loggers. Many face threats of violence from the loggers, whose trucks and equipment they've set on fire. (Bonnie Jo Mount, Dom Phillips and Jason Aldag)

The Guardians are one of two indigenous groups on this eastern fringe of the Amazon that have taken radical action to reduce illegal logging. They have tied up loggers, torched their trucks and tractors, and kicked them off the reserves.

As a result, such logging has sharply declined in these territories. But the indigenous groups have faced reprisal attacks and death threats for their actions, raising fears of more violence in an area known for its lawlessness.

The clashes highlight the continuing grave threat to the Amazon, the world's biggest remaining rain forest, which plays a crucial role in maintaining the world's climate and biodiversity. From 2005 to 2012, deforestation plunged in Brazil, as the government increased its conservation efforts and cracked down on illegal loggers. But since then, the numbers have begun to creep up again. In 2014 alone, almost 2,000 square miles of Amazon rain forest were cleared by farmers, loggers and others.

Indigenous groups play an important role in preserving Brazil's Amazon rain forest; their reserves make up roughly one-fifth of its area. Silvio da Silva, a village chief from Arariboia and an employee of the Brazilian government's indigenous agency, said that a year ago as many as 130 logging trucks left the southern end of this reserve a day. Thanks to the Guardians, that has fallen to around 10 to 15 trucks a day.

In a rare visit to the reserves permitted by the indigenous tribes, Washington Post journalists found that many residents support the militias. But others are uneasy about relying on informal armed groups to resolve a problem that should fall to the Brazilian government.

"I am very scared of a serious incident," said Nonato Sales, 65, a local cattle farmer.

The Guardians formed in 2012 "to minimize the critical situation of illegal deforestation" on this rain-forest reserve, said Olimpio Iwyramu Guajajara, 42, the group's general coordinator.

The militia contains men from the Guajajara, an indigenous tribe. A smaller Guardians militia operates in the nearby Caru reserve, also in the northeastern state of Maranhão. In 2013, a second group of indigenous people, the Ka'apor, began using similar tactics on their reserve, Alto Turiaçu, 150 miles away.

Indigenous groups like those in Arariboia have faced a growing threat to their livelihoods as loggers have pressed into their territories, where most of the remaining hardwood in this part of the Amazon is concentrated.

The threat has been even worse for [the Awá people](#), hunter-gatherers who roam through remote areas of the reserve. The loggers were "expelling the isolated Indians, finishing the food supplies that sustained them, all the hunting, fruits and fish," Iwyramu said. Brazil is home to more isolated or "non-contacted" indigenous groups than anywhere else in the world, around 80, according to [Survival International](#), a British-based group that champions the rights of tribal peoples.

President Dilma Rousseff recently promised [to end illegal logging](#) in the Amazon by 2030. A [report last year](#) by the World Resources Institute, a nonprofit group based in

Washington, concluded that indigenous communities were highly effective at conserving their own forests. “They say the forest is their life,” said Sarah Shenker, who works at Survival.

Yet the government’s agency for indigenous affairs, the National Indian Foundation, or FUNAI, has a budget this year of just \$159 million to protect 900,000 indigenous people. With such limited resources of its own, the agency has decided to provide support to the Guardians in Arariboia, including ammunition, boots and fuel for their motorbikes and all-terrain vehicles.

The armed groups are using aggressive tactics to protect their land.

A few weeks ago, a team of Guardians surrounded some loggers in their hammocks in the Arariboia reserve. “We tied them all up,” said Fernando Marciano Guajajara, 30, one of the Guardians. The militiamen went on to burn the loggers’ vehicles.

“They were very angry,” he said.

Direct Link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/world/2015/10/06/loggers/>

Costa Rica struggles with indigenous land rights

John McPhaul

2 days ago



Farmers, angered in a land dispute, burned down the home of an indigenous family in Salitre, a Bribri indigenous reserve in south-central Costa Rica, on Saturday, July 5, 2014.

An indigenous rights issue has put Costa Rica’s much-vaunted human rights record to the test as the country struggles to protect members of the Bribri and Teribe indigenous communities from non-indigenous people who have forcibly, [and at times violently](#), removed them from indigenous ancestral lands.

In late September a group of Bribri and Teribe leaders complained that the government failed to consult them before putting into place “precautionary measures” ordered last April by the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#). The measures included increased police presence in communities in and around the village of Salitre on the southern Pacific slope of the Talamanca Mountains, the scene of violence directed at the indigenous communities.

On at least one occasion early in the conflict that flared up in [July 2012](#), police officers participated in the forced removal of indigenous people from their land, and indigenous residents complain the police have stood by and done nothing to stop the attacks, according to indigenous groups.

The tripling of the police presence to some 60 officers came after several years in which the Bribri have been subject to attacks by machete- and club-wielding “whites” trying to chase the indigenous off their land by burning their houses and crops. On Sept. 17, 2012, Bribri leader Sergio Rojas, 57, the controversial president of the Salitre Integral Indigenous Development Association, was shot at six times while riding in a taxi in an apparent assassination attempt near the reserve.

Non-indigenous attackers allege that the estimated 1,800 indigenous people are squatters, even though the land lies inside the confines of an indigenous reserve established in 1977.

The problem, said Minor Mora, a member of the municipal council of Buenos Aires, a lowland regional hub, has its roots in the 1977 Indigenous Law that gave the Bribri and the Teribe rights to 11,700 hectares of land but did not provide for funds to compensate farmers who already occupied the land. In the interim the population has grown to more than 3,200 non-indigenous people, including those who have been on the land for decades and those who are more recent arrivals and bought the land with nothing more than an illegal bill of sale.

Mora said removing those families from the reserve without compensating them would create its own set of social and humanitarian problems.



Police intervene in an indigenous conflict in Salitre, in July 2014.

‘It’s hard to come to a solution’

Government spokesman Mauricio Herrera said the indigenous community is divided in many different factions, complicating a negotiated solution. The government did consult one of the factions, he said, but one faction is stubbornly demanding a quick solution of removing the non-indigenous from the land.

“It is hard to come to a solution, when one of the sides is intransigent,” Herrera said.

The Bribri faction that complained about not being consulted has refused to negotiate anything besides their own proposed solution: the removal of all non-indigenous inhabitants from the land to which they hold an ancient claim.

But the situation is more complex than merely an indigenous versus non-indigenous conflict, Herrera said.

“You have situations where Bribri are married to ‘white’ people,” Herrera said. “And you have other situations where a Bribri is married to a Cabécar,” referring to the indigenous group closely related to the Bribri.

Mora also said certain interests he did not name were concerned about cashing in on a government program that compensates landowners for not cutting down forest as part of Costa Rica’s carbon-neutral effort.

The Salitre Integral Indigenous Development Association manages the money, and Rojas, as its president, was jailed for seven months in preventive detention beginning in November 2014 while the investigation into alleged malfeasance of ₡554 million (\$1 million) going to the carbon-neutral fund was investigated.

Rojas has also been the target of charges that he has used his position to intimidate other members of the indigenous community who didn’t accept his leadership and used his power to decide who qualifies as “indigenous” and who doesn’t, leaving out Bribri who rightly have a claim to living in the reserve.

Rojas denied the accusation. “It’s false. Nobody can decide who is and who isn’t Bribri. You are Bribri if you follow our traditions and our customs. There was no intimidation,” he said.

Amilcar Castañeda, an anthropologist at Costa Rica’s State University at a Distance, said the charges and detention of Rojas were politically motivated because of Rojas’ role in the Salitre land dispute. Rojas also said it was politically motivated, claiming that he was held without being charged with a crime.

“He was a political prisoner,” said Castañeda. “It’s a case where there was disorder in the management of the association’s funds. It’s something that’s very common everywhere in the country and no one else has ever been accused of anything.”

University of Costa Rica anthropologist Marcos Guevara agrees. “The non-indigenous people do not want a strong leader who has a purpose of recovering land,” said Guevara. “Rojas poses a special danger because he can inspire indigenous in other parts of the country to demand their rights for the land.”

Neither Castañeda nor Guevara has seen the documentation allegedly supporting the accusations.

“In two years and eight months since the process began in which the 11 directors of the Integral Indigenous Development Association have been investigated, they haven’t been able to demonstrate that the supposed charges they are accused of occurred, nor any connection with them,” Rojas’ attorney Ruben Chacón told the press.

Meanwhile, alleging irregularities, the government’s National Community Development Directory (DINEDECO) removed Rojas from his position as president of the Salitre Integral Indigenous Development Association during an Aug. 23 association assembly to elect the indigenous leader, [according to the weekly Semanario Universidad](#).

DINEDECO has declared the assembly illegal because some who asked to be included were prohibited from joining while others who had no right to participate were allowed. The space where the assembly was held also was not big enough to allow for full participation.

DINEDECO said Rojas was prohibited from holding public office until Oct. 5.

Determining who has to stay and who has to go

As part of the precautionary measures, the government has proposed carrying out a study to sort out the situation to determine exactly who has to stay and who has to go, as well as who will be compensated and who will not.

But Rojas said the Bribí welcome mixed families into the community and that the government proposal is nothing more than a dilatory move.

“What we want is for them to apply the legislation that protects our rights,” he said.

The IACHR intervened after receiving a petition from the nonprofit [Forest People Programme](#) to protect members of the Bribí and Teribe communities. The members of the indigenous community, according to the IACHR, “find themselves in a grave and urgent situation since their lives and personal integrity are threatened and are at risk.”

According to the IACHR, the government gave the indigenous people title to the land in 1956, and then in 1977, gave them rights to the land in perpetuity under the Indigenous Law that created an extensive system of 24 indigenous reserves in the country – mostly in the rugged, remote Talamanca mountains that sprawl across the Panama border in the south of the country.

But over the years settlers already on the land when the Indigenous Law passed, combined with squatters, have claims to about 60 percent of the land nationwide, sometimes with no more claim than an illegal bill of sale, said Castañeda.

In Salitre, Herrera said that some of the non-indigenous landowners who have been there for decades would have to be compensated if removed, while more recent arrivals would not.

But Castañeda said that most of the land being reclaimed by the Bribri and Teribe has been taken over by absentee “owners” who live in the regional lowland hub of Buenos Aires, and it is physically occupied by no more than caretakers.



Government spokesman Mauricio Herrera, center, and Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solís.

In issuing its ruling calling for precautionary measures, the IACHR said that the gravity of the situation exists in view of “a series of continuous cycles of threats, harassment and acts of violence against members of the Teribe and Bribri communities of Salitre.”

According to the IACHR, in the Salitre area about 60 percent of the Bribri land has been taken over by outsiders, and between 80 and 88 percent of land belonging to the Teribe.

The non-indigenous “owners” of the land consider the indigenous to be the invaders. In August 2012, the Buenos Aires municipal council declared Rojas persona non grata.

The indigenous communities’ latest effort to reclaim their land dates to July 2012, when Rojas organized a group of indigenous people to return. The families had been living either in slums in Buenos Aires or numerous families to a house inside the reserve, Rojas said.

“There was no reason for our people to live like that when we had a right to our own land, so we organized an effort to take it back,” Rojas said.

The Forest Peoples Programme alleged that despite numerous meetings between the indigenous leaders, the non-indigenous owners and the government, the latter did not take adequate measures to protect the indigenous communities.

Costa Rica's indigenous peoples, estimated at around 60,000, remain the poorest and most marginalized sector of Costa Rican society.

Living in remote areas of the country, often far from vital services, indigenous communities consistently rank at the bottom of the country's human development indices. Indigenous groups like the Teribe have seen their culture decimated and have little left of their language.

The Bribri and the closely related Cabécar groups have been able to retain more of their culture and language, thanks in large part to the remoteness of their villages in the rugged, virtually inaccessible zones of the Talamanca mountains.

Correction: A previous version of this story incorrectly converted ₡554 million to \$110 million. It's actually \$1 million. We regret the error.

Direct Link: <http://www.ticotimes.net/2015/10/07/costa-rica-struggles-with-indigenous-land-rights>